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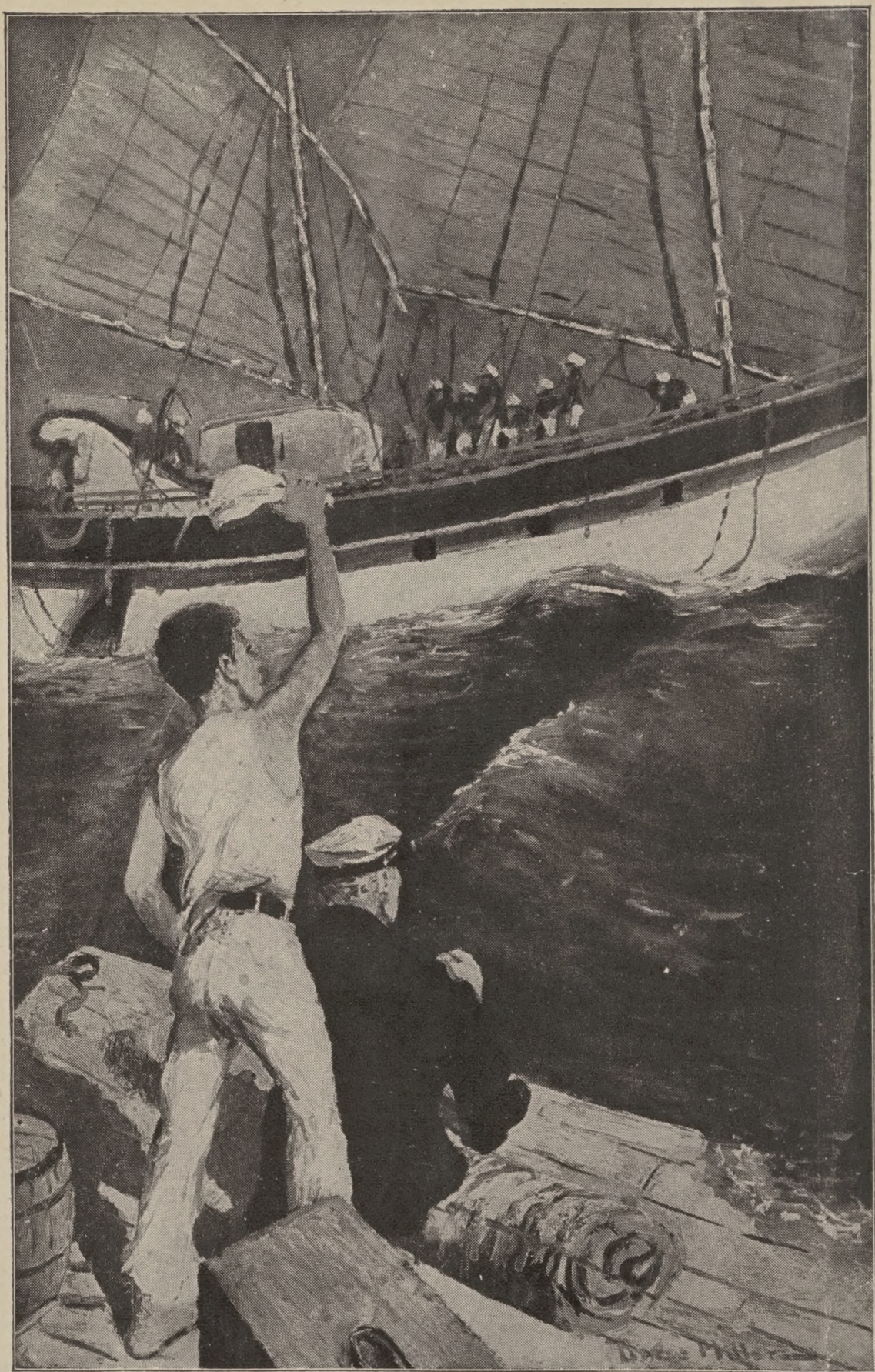
THE CASTAWAYS OF
BANDA SEA



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TORONTO



THE CASTAWAYS OF BANDA SEA

BY

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AUTHOR OF "SEA FIGHTERS," ETC.



New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1921

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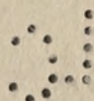
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THE CASTAWAYS OF BANDA SEA

CHAPTER I

THE CASTAWAYS OF BANDA SEA

George Sloan awoke with a cough and a gasp from his pandanus-leaf mat on the deck of the pearl schooner, *Kawani*. The boy's eyes ran tears, for an acrid odor of burnt pine and oakum filled the air, and even in the gray of early dawn the cracks in the decks glowed red, for under her hatches the *Kawani* was all afire and had been for days. It was a race against time for Amboina on Ceram, still two hundred miles away. Down below, the fire was eating the heart out of the little trading schooner, while the tar bubbled in her seams and wisps of smoke rose in steady streams from her decks. One could not move about, except along the flat taffrail of her bulwarks.

George sat up, rubbing his swollen eyelids. Then he jumped to his feet with a hoarse cry of dismay.

"Father," he shrieked, "our boat's gone!"

Captain Jack Sloan looked up hurriedly from where he was nodding over the wheel in the faint, early light.

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"Look at the after cleat!" yelled George, running aft along the taffrail. "The niggers got away in our boat, last watch!"

"Jerusha's Cats!" roared Captain Jack. "They must have slipped over the side and then come up from behind and cast loose the painter while I was tending wheel!"

"Well, she's gone—and we're alone on this firepot," groaned his son bitterly. "She won't last another day, I'll bet."

"Lord bless you, son—we'll drive her over to Amboina, don't you worry!" reassured the father cheerily. "We must be half-way over Banda Sea by now, and the southeast monsoon's holding good."

"Well—let's eat!" shrugged the boy, his round full face, with the bold, fearless blue eyes that his father had come to rely upon, breaking into a cheerful grin. "Sorry cookee left without giving notice, but I'll shake up a little something and relieve you at the wheel at eight bells."

He set about dishing up a feed of eggs, yams, and bananas, frying the hen-seed in pork fat on the ship's stove, which had been set up on deck. Everything needful had been brought topside, and the main hatch and cabin doors and hatches hermetically sealed and caulked when the cargo fire had got beyond control three days ago, so that the *Kawani's* deck now looked like a camp.

The tropical sun came up like a fiery thundercloud in the east, rising in a great ball of fire over the glassy Banda Sea, and the smooth combers of the steady old monsoon. The schooner's sails hung out broad abeam. It was so calm that they did not have to touch a rope. There was nothing to do but watch for smoke bursts, and caulk them with oakum as fast as the fire ate away a crack in the deck.

At sunrise the Captain took a time sight with the sextant, and George worked out the longitude as $131^{\circ} 11' 26''$ East; and at noon the latitude shot gave them $5^{\circ} 1' 14''$ South of the equator.

"Wal'r," rumbled Captain Jack, "that gives us 190 miles yet to Amboina, son, and we're about 110 miles due west of Ke'. No use goin' there. The December fleet of proas has already gone on to Aru, and we'd never get away from there for six months, until the July monsoon. We just gotta make Amboina in the old hooker."

"Gosh, father, when we *do* get there, *please* sell your pearls and let's get a steamer back home to 'Frisco and a train to Gloucester," begged the boy earnestly. "It's too hot to live, down here! Seems to me I'd give every pearl in your wallet for just one breath of good old Massachusetts air! Or one good sight of Thatcher's Lights again! It's more like five centuries than five years that we've been down here," complained the boy. "I'd rather have a little twenty-

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five-ton haddock all my own to sail, and put in the coldest winter on George's Banks, than make a million down here!"

"Waal, boy, it's about time we pulled out," agreed the Captain. "They say fishin's good up Gloucester way now, and Lord love ye, we'll have money enough to buy *two* schooners, once we get over to Amboina and sell our pearls!"

The afternoon wore on, with the stifling heat shimmering up from the hot decks, and the brown, choking smoke wafting over them in waves. George went over the side and sat on the rudder, watching narrowly for sharks, during his father's trick at the wheel. He was dashing water over himself and dangling his legs in the cool sea, when a shout from on deck recalled him.

"George! Hi, George!—fire gettin' out around the foremast!" hailed the Captain. "Come up—quick!"

George swung up a boom-crotch rope hanging over the stern, and ran along the taffrail to where a shoot of flame licked up around the mast through the step hole. With mallet and wads of oakum he was driving in a fresh fire plug—when, *Boom!* with a smash of burning cinders, the whole oak mast partner gave way, exposing a deep, glowing hole below!

With a rush like an oil gusher, the pent-up flames licked up around the mast. Captain John lashed the wheel and dashed forward to help. They fed the

fiery hole rope's ends, blankets, mats, everything movable on deck, but all to no avail; for the fire ate them up like feathers, and then, with a dull roar, shot up along the mast. Instantly the foresail caught fire, and a second later the flame leaped over to the mainsail, and that, too, went up like a burning curtain. Showers of burning canvas and bits of blazing bolt-rope fell on the deck, and the Sloans dodged and fought among them as best they might. When it was all over, they were still alive, but the bare masts smoked above them, while a column of fire ran ceaselessly up the foremast.

"We got to git the main hatch off and put her overboard, son," shouted the Captain. "The ship's gone, and it's the only big thing that will float. Drop the main gaff, quick!"

George ran to the fife rail and lowered the bare, swinging spar by its charred and smoking halliards. Cutting away as much of the rope as was too scorched to trust, they made a derrick of the boom and swung it around over the hatch. A purchase, of the two main sheet blocks, was rigged, and the rope fastened in the big ring-bolt in the center of the hatch.

"Now, son, we got to act quick and smart, for when that hatch comes off, the whole schooner will be ablaze! When I give the word, you knock away the hatch wedges and I'll heave on the tackle. Ready, now—hand-some-ly!"

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George hopped on the sizzling hatch and drove out the wedges with his mallet. Then he jumped for the taffrail, as he felt the hatch lifting beneath him. It was hardly necessary for Captain Jack to heave up on the tackle; the fire shot around the hatch rim, fairly bursting it off, like the lid of a steam kettle. A huge sheet of flame rose as they swung the boom, and the hatch teetered over the taffrail and dropped hissing into the sea. George leaped overboard and swam to it.

"Look alive, now—catch 'em!" yelled his father, heaving over bedding, grub tins, their sea chest, sextant—everything movable on deck. Then he cast loose the big oak water butt and rolled it over the side. George secured it with a rope's end, after which his father, ducking low under the roaring mass of flames that was now the *Kawani*, dived overboard and swam out to the hatch.

"Well!—we're alive, anyhow!" he grunted philosophically, as he crawled over the hatch rim. "The sharks can't get us, and if no sea gets up and one of them proas comes along, we'll get home, some time this century!"

George grinned. "Regular Robinson Crusoe stuff, father!" he laughed. "Somehow it's a relief to get off that old fire trap, though! You never can tell what fire's up to down below. I've heard of ships that blew up trying to smother it with battened hatches."

Two days passed. Hot, they were, without a rag of shade, as, surrounded by a ring of expectant sharks, the hatch drifted helplessly on the Banda Sea. The sextant showed them working steadily toward the Banda volcano island to the east, but not going over fifteen miles a day, so variable are the currents in these seas.

During all that time not a sail showed over the horizon. The trading fleet had gone by, and they were too far out to sight any small coasters. As for the steamer from Singapore to Australia, she was not due for two weeks yet. On the third day George was dozing against the grub box in the shade, when a sort of mirage—the mere ghost of something visible over the far horizon—made him jump up on the chest with a wild shout of relief. Three tiny sticks close together jutted up over the rim of the sea!

“Sail ho, dad!” he yelled, rousing the Captain out of a sound sleep. His father joined him excitedly on the box lid.

“Proa!” he pronounced. “Them’s her yard-ends. We gotta rig a signal mast, somehow.”

“I reckon it’ll be me!” laughed the boy, ripping off his shirt. “We’ll take turns standing on the box and waving for them, seeing that we haven’t a spar on the raft.”

The three distant stakes were now joined by a brown curve of matting, as the proa’s sail rose steadily out

of the sea. She was bowling right along and her course would bring her within signaling distance, as the Captain noted with a grunt of satisfaction.

"Got y'r automatic loaded, son?" he asked George. "You never can tell what sort of birds ship in these proas. Jest as like to be Guinea pirates as not."

George slipped the compact little blue-steel automatic out of his hip pocket and examined its magazine clip, to be sure that it was ready for business. The stubby little .32 cartridges were perfectly good at short range, and he had ten shots quick with them. The proa sail had now developed into a large brown dipping lug, with the two long yardarms curving up like a cone. The body of the proa and its outrigger were as yet invisible. Nevertheless, George began waving the white shirt, so eager was he to be taken off the raft and get some man's food to eat, after three days of ship's biscuit and water.

Ten minutes later the proa veered her big lateen sail over and started off on the other tack.

"Yeeow! Atta stuff!—They've seen us and changed course, father!" yelled George exultingly. "Hooroo for home!"

"Mebbe—mebbe!" ventured the elder man cautiously. "Got to go slow on this, kid. Remember, silence is the word about those pearls!"

The proa was not over two miles off now, and they could see that the crew were Javanese and Bugis, by

the conical hats of Java and the turbans of the Moham-medan Bugis.

"Thank the Lord they're not black birds, anyhow!" exclaimed the Captain contentedly. "We seem to be in luck, son. They're Malays—a treacherous lot. Be mighty careful what you say, boy. If they get any idea of those pearls, we'll both be krissed the first night."

Vigorously the crew of the proa shouted and gesticulated at them, for this tack had brought her close abeam. Her captain was a small, brown-faced Javanese, with thin, regular features, a cruel, close-lipped mouth, and small, avaricious black eyes that glistened at them under his tall, conical straw hat. The proa let out her main sheet and hung idly floating, some twenty yards away from the raft, while a colloquy went on in Malay between Captain Jack and the Javanese.

"Where are they bound, father?" interrupted George, unable to restrain longer his eagerness.

"Ke', son—we'll have to make the best of it——"

"*Ke'!*" echoed George, and there was a world of disappointment in his tone as he slumped down on the chest, heartsick with foreboding. Another long delay in getting home—and the future looked worse than blank!"

"Now you've spilled the beans!" barked his father angrily. "Didn't I tell you to keep your mouth shut?"

That Javanese is watching you—and I've just told him we'd be real pleased to go to Ke'. We'd love it—we would! Now he more than suspects we're pearlers."

George kicked himself, inwardly, and did his best to act pleased, but even he could see that the ruse was worse than wasted on the Javanese. Captain Jack soon made a dicker with him for the passage to Ke' and their few belongings were transferred from the raft to the proa.

As George stepped aboard, he examined her all over with a boy's interest in a new and outlandish craft. She was about forty feet long, built entirely out of log planks carved and gouged out of the solid tree-trunk to fit their places in the shell of the boat, and each carved plank was joined to the next with wooden dowel pins, like the leaves of a table. The whole boat was then tied together with thin iron-wood cross-ribs, lashed to lugs on the planks with turns of rattan. George had been a great boat-builder as a small boy back in Gloucester. During those penniless days, he had often thought of cutting his own planks from trees in the forest and pinning them up to make a boat like this. Here was the real thing, built at Ke' by the greatest boat-builders in the Malay Archipelago. The rigging, too, interested him. There was not a halliard or a block on the ship, for the upper yard of the big lateen sail was fastened to the top of a mast, made of three bamboo poles like a tripod. Two of these poles

were pinned at their feet to the gunwales of the proa and met at the top in a wooden yoke, to which the third, the rear pole, was pinned. To raise the sail the Malays pushed up on this third pole, when the other two would rise about their pins like a pair of shears, taking the yard up with them. The lower yard stayed down of its own weight and had two ropes tied to it, a tack and a sheet, by which the sail could be hauled around.

The Javanese captain led them to a small rattan coop on deck and assigned them to the forward cabin of it, his own being the after one, with a mat screen dividing the two. Here they stowed the few possessions they had been able to save off the *Kawani*, and then went forward to where a Javanese cook was serving out a curry of rice and goat's meat from a small charcoal brazier. George grabbed the carved wooden spoon handed to him by the cook and fell to with a will, his father seconding him scarcely less heartily. They studied the crew about them, curiously, as the proa bowled along towards Ke', at about eight knots an hour. There were only six men and the captain, and all wore the cotton jackets and white sarongs of Java, and had krisses and parangs in wooden sheaths swinging at their belts. Two of the crew sat out on the outrigger, for the proa was very narrow, and they laughed and joked with those at mess, while their bare, brown feet paddled in the water atop the oblong, cigar-shaped body of the outrigger which dived along

like a great fish under the bamboo poles securing it to the proa's gunwales.

"Gosh!" thought the boy to himself. "We two white men, with our automatics, are more than a match for the whole six! Wouldn't I like to rush 'em and turn this hooker around for Amboina! I suppose father wouldn't stand for it, though," he sighed, abandoning the impulse to propose the idea. He decided to lie awake that night, however, and keep watch in the rattan coop over his father, for it would be quite likely that the Javanese would search him for pearls, after that "break" he had made while they were bargaining for a passage.

His father seconded the idea heartily, once they were alone in the cabin and could talk things over.

"You certainly gummed the deck, son," whispered the Captain, angrily. "Either we are copra traders, in which case we'd just as leave go to Ke' as anywhere else, or we are pearlers. And, in this sea we could be headed for just one port, Amboina, if we had pearls—and you gave the game away. We'll have to take watches, turn and turn about, so long as we are on this ship. I'll sleep the first watch, for it will be easier for you to stay awake, then."

That evening the sun set in a golden ball of fire over the rim of the sea to the west, and George sat beside the Mohammedan steersman, the *jurumuddi*, watching the flow of phosphorescent flashes eddying around the

starboard rudder—for there were two of them, one for each tack.

His father retired early, and the boy followed soon after, to take up his watch, lying across the small door of the coop. It was black as pitch inside, and the cabin smelled sweet and grassy of the vegetable scents of palm and pandanus leaves and rattan. It made him drowsy, and the thick mat under him felt good after two nights on the hard boards of the hatch. He was dozing off, in spite of himself, when a faint rustling somewhere in the cabin made him sit up, wide awake.

The boy listened intently, trying to locate the sound in the pitchy blackness. He decided that it came from the thatch wall behind the bunk where his father lay sleeping, and he crept over there, noiselessly. The Captain breathed deeply, with the stertorous breath of one dog-tired and sound asleep, as George's hand crept softly over his broad chest. Then he lunged forward with a shiver of excitement, for, up near the Captain's neck his hand encountered a long, skinny mess of cold, clammy fingers! He gripped it savagely, but the greasy hand squirmed through his like a live eel, and was gone through the leafy screen of the partition.

Stifling a cry of astonishment, the boy instantly plunged his hand under the Captain's collar and felt for the bag of pearls. It was gone!

A sickening feeling of utter hopelessness assailed

him. This was the end of everything. If they were not krissed or thrown to the sharks on the morrow, or even if delivered alive at Ke', they would be a pair of wretched beach-combers, and would have to begin all over again, to even earn enough money to get over to Amboina. The pearls *must* be recovered. They would be somewhere on the proa, but where the Javanese would hide them, he could not in the least conjecture. Then an idea swept over him. Suppose he were already hiding them? Certainly not in his own cabin, nor anywhere on him, for he would know well that the white men would hold him up for them, just as soon as they discovered the theft. George got up and crept out of the cabin onto the starlit deck. He had but one idea, to watch the Javanese's door until morning, to see that he could not get out of his own cabin without detection. That, at least, would locate the pearls in one known spot on the ship.

He crept around the corner of the rattan coop, and listened carefully. Not a sound came to his ears. The stars grouped around the Southern Cross swung brightly overhead and he could see fairly well in the gloom. There would be a single Javanese on watch forward, and a Mohammedan steersman aft, as the day watch were asleep down in the waist. He edged over to the Javanese's door and listened inside. There was not even a sound of breathing. Then he worked over to the other corner. A white, hatless figure was

standing up near the foremast! It must be the Javanese captain, he realized, for the crew on watch wore conical hats.

After a time the man came silently back, and George withdrew without being seen and reëntered his own cabin. Boring his knuckles in the Captain's side, he woke him and whispered him the situation.

"Thunder and Mars!" ejaculated the Captain under his breath. "Bring your automatic, son! We'll hold up this bird, right now!"

"What's the use, father?" begged the boy earnestly. "There'd only be the devil of a row, and maybe a shooting, and we could prove nothing on the Javanese. Let's lay low. I think I know where they are, and we'll get them back before we get to Ke'. That's the big thing, now."

The Captain pondered awhile. "Guess you're right, son," he muttered. "We'll have to act as if nothing had happened, and watch our chance. At that, the pearls may be on him, too, you know. Jerusha's Cats, but we're out of luck!"

George was up early to investigate. The two tall bamboo legs of the foremast towered aloft, carrying the long yard of the sail at the yoke up near their tops, but there was nothing that he could see anywhere that would make a hiding place for anything at all. Still, here was where the Javanese stood last night. That was all he had to go on.

He went back to the cabin to report, before the Javanese captain appeared on deck.

"We'll have to stick close together, son," rumbled the Captain, "for their next move will be to pick a fake fight with us and either tip us overboard or perhaps kriss us in a fight. Now that he has the pearls, that Javanese will not rest until he gets rid of us before he sights Ke', I'm thinking."

The Javanese appeared on deck for breakfast. He greeted them with his usual cold civility, and there was not a sign on either side that anything out of the ordinary had happened.

"It's him, all right, though!" muttered George to his father. "See the scratches on his hand, where my nails cut him?"

The Captain nodded. "Wait!" he counseled. "Something will develop, right sudden soon. We raise Ke' by noon."

Up in the eyes of the ship was a small lacquered shrine, and, after breakfast, the Javanese captain called together his three retainers and opened the doors, disclosing a gilded Buddha within, mounted on a carved teak altar. They prostrated themselves before it, burning joss sticks to appease the shark gods, lest any fall overboard and be caught by one of the monsters circling constantly around the proa. Then another joss stick was burned, to placate the storm gods and give them fair weather, and still another to the haunts

(spirits) down below, who controlled the adverse and variable currents in the sea, which were often setting them off their course and were seldom the same for any voyage across these seas. George watched the Javanese captain at prayer, curiously, as his father explained the meaning of the ceremonies. The pearls were hidden in or around the idol, he was convinced. He would have liked the chance to do some fine, manly, Christian deed for this Javanese that would make him act like a white man and restore them; but he felt, with a sigh, that this would be impossible. They were as far apart in their moral codes as the Poles. This man could be sincere and worship the Buddha with all the fervor of the highest-minded Christian, but it did not make him any the less a hypocrite that his conscience would permit him to steal the sole wealth of a couple of helpless castaways on his ship. No; it would be a fight for their very lives, he realized, and to win back by righteous force instead of Christian Golden Rule the pearls that meant everything to them.

George pondered on this, as the Javanese went through the forms of his prayers. His eyes rested idly on the base of the starboard bamboo leg of the foremast as he mused. Then he became aware that the Javanese, for all his prayers, was watching him narrowly out of the tail of his eye. There was ferocity in the look—as in the green glare one gets from a leopard, back in the dark depths of his cage—and there

was suspicion there, too! Immediately George began to examine the foremast with more interest. That look meant something—he had seen that expression in a child's eyes, when you get too "warm" near a hidden object.

Abruptly the Javanese stopped the ceremonies, and, under pretext of excluding all foreigners from the sacred Buddha, ordered the Sloans, father and son, to their cabin. George went back, his eyes alight with the joy of discovery.

"I tell you where the pearls are, father!" he cried. "Up somewhere near the foremast! You ought to have seen the look that fellow gave me just before he shooed us away! I'll prowl around up there, the next chance I get!"

"Mebbe," grunted the Captain, half-convinced. "It's my bet that they're hidden in or around the idol. The thing for us to do is to scheme out a way to search it. The off watch will go below soon, and the cook will get busy at his brazier and pans. That leaves one Javanese seaman only, for'd. You stay in here, and I'll send him to you for a present, first chance I get, when the captain goes aft. Then's my chance to get a look at that idol."

He went out, George watching him with many misgivings, for they were now separated. He could see his father yarning with the Javanese lookout up in the forecastle, the proa captain lowering at him and hang-

ing around suspiciously. After perhaps half an hour, the captain went aft, and presently the lookout poked his head into the cabin door. He grinned at George, engagingly, and seemed to be expecting something. The boy gave him an empty tin box out of his sea chest and kept him in play as long as he could, trying to tell a funny story by signs, which amused the sailor hugely.

Then Captain Jack came back, and the sailor hurried forward to his duties. The Captain looked weary and disappointed.

"There was not a danged thing in the shrine, and the idol was solid bronze," he announced despondently. "It did not take a minute to see that the back of the shrine was against the solid teak bulkhead of the forepeak, and there were no drawers anywhere in it, and the sides were of plain teak boards. That scoundrel either has them on him yet or has hidden them somewhere else. We'll have to look alive about this, son, for we're already rising Ke' to the east. I've got a good mind to hold up that son-of-a-sea-cook right now—doggone, if I don't!" he exclaimed impetuously, rising and drawing his automatic.

"Wait a bit, father!" interrupted George. "It's my trick at the wheel. You keep near me, but not too near, and I'll have a look at that foremast."

Leaving the cabin he worked along deck, keeping the rattan coop between him and the Javanese captain

aft, who was talking to the steersman. George examined the foot of the foremast carefully. A single crack went from top to bottom of the first bamboo joint. It was an ordinary weather crack, such as old bamboo is full of, but George's heart beat wildly with hope, for on the forward side might be another one. He stooped down quickly and examined it. On the forward side was an identical crack, in the same joint! Feverishly he whipped out his clasp knife and dug it in, in the upper corner of the joint. It sprung a little, showing a close-fitted, hair-line crack in the upper joint of the bamboo. Prying with all his strength, he bent the hollow wood outward, and then an interior fastening gave way with a sharp snap, and the small bamboo door in the mast swung open. Inside was the wallet of pearls!

George reached in his hand. But he drew it back hastily and attempted to rise, for a warning shout from his father and the swift patter of bare feet on the deck made him turn about. The Javanese captain was rushing at him with drawn kriss, snarling a riot of Malay curses.

A man can strike far quicker with his fist than he can with a heavy knife, and George lunged up at the Javanese with the swift up-spring of a boxer. His fist met the oncoming jaw of his adversary with a sharp crack, and knocked him flat on the deck. Like a leopard, the Javanese leaped to his feet, came at George

again, and made a murderous lunge with the kriss that brought doom to himself, for, as George's arm shot up to ward off the threatening knife, the Malay's foot tripped and he overswung with the slashing drive of the heavy kriss, plunging headlong over the side with the momentum of his blow!

A yell came from the steersman aft as he swung the proa in a big circle, but she swept by the struggling man, striking out hurriedly in the water. He dropped astern, and then, under their horrified eyes, a long, gray shape shot by with the swiftness of a torpedo, and the Javanese disappeared under water with a scream of mortal terror. They all stared, aghast, at the reddish swirl of eddying sea that closed over him.

No one spoke for a time. George turned away, shaken and sickened. Then his father stepped forward and roared out an order in Malay. It brought the other seaman and the cook tumbling on deck, while the steersman paid off the main sheet and the proa hung idly waiting, with flapping mat sail. Captain Jack harangued them for some time. His tones were forceful, commanding, decisive, George noted, and he could see submission coming into their untamed, fierce eyes. At length the oldest amongst them agreed to something in guttural tones, and shouted to the steersman aft, who put the proa about and headed across the sea for Amboina.

The Captain turned and mopped his brow.

"Well, son—that'll be about all, I guess. Cheer up, man, you look sick!"

"Oh, it was horrible, that shark business, father!" groaned the lad.

"I know it was horrible," said his father, seriously. "There are plenty of horrible things a sailorman strikes in these seas, you know. And," he added, putting his hand on the boy's shoulder, "I came near losing *you* that time, son. Some day you'll realize how much you mean to those that love you. If he hadn't tripped he might have krissed you. And that would have been more than horrible—to me."

"Well," said the boy thoughtfully, "it was a case of his life or mine, I suppose. Just the same, I'm mighty thankful that it wasn't I that knocked him overboard."

"Sure! That's the right way to feel, even about these here Javanese. Things are coming our way now, son. I've told them that this matter will have to be reported to the Governor at Amboina, and they have agreed to let me sail her over, paying them for the time. That was some punch you handed him, though, son!" he exclaimed, looking at George's lean, sinewy young frame admiringly. "They say that a single salvo of fourteen-inch guns can change the history of the world—well, one good paste from that mitt of yours has sure changed ours!"

CHAPTER II

"PEARL ATOLL"

"She's makin' weather to the east'rd, George," rumbled Captain Sloan, scanning the thunder-heads drifting over from the stormy New Guinea coast with an uneasy eye.

"Huh! We'll get a good chance to try the Malay way of shortening sail on these proas, eh?" retorted George, eager anticipation shining in his merry blue eyes. Since they had put the proa about for Amboina, the youth had been itching to try that stunt! They were now a day's sail west of Ke'. Captain Sloan had decided to make Ceram by way of the Matabello Islands and the chain of islets that reaches the mainland from there. Navigating the proa, however, made him feel like a cat in a strange garret, for the craft was entirely novel to him; the safest way seemed to be to cross from Ke', following the chain of small atolls to Ceram.

"Mebbe, son; I hope we *won't* have to shorten sail. What this crate'll do in a blow neither you nor I know. The only wide passage is between Boön and Teor,

where we've got a gap of about twenty-five miles clear sea-way. We ought to pick up Teor this afternoon, on this course. It's a palm island, but there are about a million little cocoa-palm atolls around it, so we gotta keep a bright lookout. Hosts of Pharaoh, a man'll drift out of course like a length of bamboo in these currents!"

George went forward, for his father trusted him best as lookout. Astern of him the whole proa dipped and rose on the smooth swells of the Banda Sea, her two mat lugger sails, bellying from the yards, hung at the heads of her tripod masts. Over to the east, a thick gray mist, topped with thunder-heads and split with vivid sheet lightning, told of a tropical thunder-storm bearing over from New Guinea. It would be upon them in about an hour, the boy reckoned, and he planned out just what they would do. When the squall hit them, he and one of the Javanese sailors would dash for the prop pole of the forward mast and lift it from its socket, letting the two yoke poles come swinging down about the long iron-wood pin which fastened them to the gunwales—those same poles in the base of one of which the Javanese captain had hidden their pearls. Meanwhile, his father would be doing the same with the mainmast, and both yards would come tumbling down.

As he watched, it fell a flat calm. That squall cloud was sucking to itself all the wind. What there

was came puffy and variable, but he could see that his father did not want to abandon the proa to the currents until the last moment, for he still kept sail on her. The horizon seemed to creep nearer; the squall cloud could not be seven miles away now, and its long, black, cigar shape with a ragged, wind-torn lower fringe, lay across the whole eastern horizon. There was a distant mutter of thunder. Anxiously George's eyes scanned all around the horizon, for if there was land bearing anywhere he wanted to sight it before this thing shut them in.

"Land ho, dad!" he shouted, perhaps a quarter of an hour later, for his keen eyes had detected the tiny black dots of palm tops just jutting above the glassy horizon to the west. "There's Teor, bearing north-nor'west."

"Good!" hailed the Captain. "We'll pass between it and Boön handsomely, if some current doesn't get us. I'll hold sail all I can."

They both watched the oncoming squall, while the *jurumuddi* steered their course, praying volubly. The two Javanese sailors went aft and begged the Captain to let down the sail. They were badly frightened, and wanted to play safe—good and safe!

"No!" stamped Captain Sloan stubbornly. "We gotto get every fathom of westing we can—and *then* we won't be any too safe! Sword of Jehoshaphat, men, what would ye? We can't anchor in this hundred-

fathom water! We'll just drift at the mercy of the currents, once the sails are down!"

A low moan came from over the horizon to the east. It swiftly developed into a subdued, snarling roar as of many waters gnashing. Overhead the great squall cloud rode high, its black edges ragged and angry. Behind it, a gloom as of night, rent with forked lightning, filled the void. Then white foam, stretching in a long line from north to south, spread across the horizon. They could see it coming over the lead-colored sea. There was wind a-plenty there, even though their own waves were still smooth and oily!

"All—hands—shorten sail!" yelled the Captain.

George and the Javanese leaped like sprinters toward the foot of the tripod pole. With a heave that strained their backs they lifted the great prop from its socket and slid it aft along deck. The yoke above creaked and the gunwale pins groaned as the mast swung down. Captain Sloan had done the same by the mainmast, and both yards came down together like the folding up of a fan, while their prop poles trailed out astern into the sea.

They were none too soon! While they were still disengaging themselves from the folds of the mat sails, the wind smote upon them with a fury awful and unending. There was fast and furious action for a few moments, for both yards were being whipped about across the waves and the sails bellied and threat-

ened to drive overboard. Captain Sloan made a flying leap for the leach of the mainsail and hung on with an iron grip. George could see his white teeth set as he held to the sail with every ounce of his strength, his toes hooking under the bamboo gunwale to keep himself from being lifted bodily overboard. George himself and his Javanese had got a rope around their sail and were fighting it savagely, getting a lashing around here, snubbing a rope around a pin there. The proa veered up into the wind, with both crews flinging themselves on the unruly mats—and then came the rain, in a white deluge, smothering everything and everybody in a choking, screaming, white fury. Thunder went off like cannon crackers all around them; the play of lightning was vivid and incessant, but they scarce could give it a thought in the concentrated struggle to secure those sails. The palm mat was far harder to furl than canvas; unwieldy and stubborn, it took all of an hour to get the yards inboard and lashed in their places along the bamboo framework of the outriggers.

Night had come down with tropical suddenness before Captain Sloan could give a thought to where the proa might now be.

"It's a case of ears and eyes, son," he warned George in a high-pitched shout across the wind. "Heaven knows where we've drifted to, but you can hear the roar of surf quite a distance even in this blow. Never

let a single lightning flash go by without seeing all you can."

"Couldn't we anchor, dad? Gee, it's fierce, this drifting we know not where—what if we hit an atoll!"

"May go right over one in these high seas!" yelled Captain Sloan through his cupped hands. "They often get inundated in a storm—they're so low out of water!"

Cheerful thought! George lay on the yards along the top of the thatch deck house and listened with all his ears. The dark horizon showed in a narrow circle of high, whitecapped seas, on which the proa rode like a gull, but his glimpses of anything at all were now few and far between, for the thunderstorm had gone on and its sheet lightning glared far to the west. Only the high wind and the angry sea remained as a reminder of the commotion it had caused.

Captain Sloan barked out an order in Malay. In the dark, George saw him and the two Javanese hurrying forward to the anchor. It was a great, clumsy contraption, the fork of a tree with a big stone lashed to it with rattan. They worked over it, getting it clear to go overboard, while the boy maintained his vigil. Pitch darkness set in. He could see nothing now. A pall, so intense that it seemed velvet blackness, enveloped them, with the wind steadily going down. It was the intense darkness at the end of the storm, he

knew, but it would be hours before the sea would calm down, too.

He was listening, so that he could almost hear his heart beats, when off to port something loomed up even blacker than the blackness of inky night around them. No sound whatever of surf came to his tense ears, but a swishing noise and the lapping of small waves buffeting against something could be heard distinctly.

"Let go anchor—quick, dad!" he yelled. "We're drifting on something to port! Overboard with her! White sticks—columns—no, it's trees!" he screamed.

The anchor splashed over, amid a whirl of oaths and grunts. The proa minded it not at all, but rode in on the huge swells, drifting in long sweeps, her anchor fetching up nowhere. Nearer and nearer loomed the black vagueness, and the swishing tops of palm trees loomed up overhead, close aboard—and then, with a crash of riven planks, the proa was upon them! She stopped dead, butted and rammed herself on the stout trunks, grinding and tearing up her outrigger and bamboo framework, while they all dodged the flying splinters.

"She's lost! Jump, lad, quick, for the nearest tree!" shouted Captain Sloan, as the proa swept down sideways against a great smooth bole. George felt himself catapulted at it as the proa struck, and he flung his arms around the trunk and began to climb, while

the boat fell away below him on the surge. He shinned swiftly up into the top, the boom and smash of the boat butting herself to pieces among the trunks coming to his ears like a funeral knell.

"Father! Father!" he called. "Are you safe!"

"Here son!" called a deep, reassuring voice out of the night. "Got one of the crew up with me. We're on an inundated atoll, I take it. No hope for the proa. Stay where you are until morning."

A voice cried out from another tree, off somewhere in the dark. They recognized it as the Bugis cook, gibbering Mohammedan prayers. Dull thuds came from below among the waters, where the logs of the proa were floating about.

"We'll pick up what's left in the morning!" called the Captain cheerfully. "And then we'll know where we are. Think hearty, son! Cheerily-O! We're still alive!"

They waited, hour after hour, for dawn. The noises of the sea below gradually died down, and then came ticking and running sounds as of dry land reappearing when the tide goes out. Dawn came at last. A curious sight! Out to the horizon stretched the smooth, gray sea, calm as a grand mirror, without a sign of last night's turmoil to remind them of the tremendous moods of the eternal ocean. Down below—fifty feet down—was drowned and scoured sand, with jungle plant leafage jutting up through it. A

tangled mass of cordage and spars of the proa festooned around the trunks on the stout palm mats. Further on, a pair of proa planks, neatly split around the smooth column of a palm, hung like a pair of shears, tied together at their tops with the remnants of a rib. One of the outrigger's lay jammed by its iron-wood gunwale beam between two close-growing sago palms. There was but little litter of wreckage; most of it had drifted into the lagoon of the atoll.

“All hands—lay down!” called the Captain, jocularly, from his tree. It would be mighty tough luck that could break old Captain Jack's spirit! thought George, as he sang out, “Aye, aye, sir!” and unbuckled his belt so as to make a safe descent.

He made a loop of it around the palm and let himself down backward, moving the belt notch by notch as it passed the scars of former leaf stems, which also formed tolerable steps for his feet. Captain Sloan and the Javanese sailor had meanwhile descended, and presently they were joined by the cook, his sacred green turban—signifying he had been to Mecca—much in disarray.

It was interesting to watch the four survivors on this lonely atoll, George thought, each man following his own primitive instincts; for, now that they had no ship, all semblance of command and discipline seemed to have gone with her. The cook laid an eye on the sago palm tree, judging its age with a critical glance;

and up it he swarmed, with his knife dangling by a lanyard across his chest, intent on getting the material for sago bread.

The Javanese sailor walked about, inspecting the remains of the proa and shaking his head solemnly, as if wondering by what miracle it could be ever brought together again. George and his father went across the belt of palms to the shore of the lagoon, to get some idea of the size of the atoll and the location of what wreckage might be left.

"The first thing for us to find, son, is my sea chest," rumbled Captain Sloan. "With the sextant, and our book of log-tables we can get some idea where we are, so we can figger where to go next."

"It was in the little rattan house on deck, father. I suppose that went adrift like a basket as soon as we were swept in among the palms. I didn't see any signs of it on this side of the atoll, did you?"

"Nary a sign, son. Still, that chest was pretty heavy—both our cutlasses, the sex., some books, and our spare ammunition are in it. It's my guess it either drifted across the lagoon or sank before it ever got to t'other side——"

"Or went clear on out to sea, perhaps," finished George for him. "This lagoon's sure a little feller; it isn't three hundred yards wide."

"New atoll; it probably gets inundated every big storm. But the next tide will leave us land enough,

so we won't have to take to the trees. We'll start exploring the hull business right now, son."

George felt mighty hollow and empty about the bread-basket, but it wouldn't take an hour to go around the whole ring of the atoll. Besides, they might come upon a tin of coffee or some of the proa's food stores. He did not relish an exclusive diet of cocoanuts and sago bread. They walked back to where the Javanese and the cook had established a sort of camp amid the proa wreckage. Her fire-pot brazier had gone overboard and sunk like a stone at the first strike, and, rallying around it as a camp, the cook had set up a kitchen, with quantities of sago pith ready to be pulped.

The Javanese was setting about fire making. He had shaved a log of the proa wood until he had got down to bone-dry fiber. In one end he had split a cleft and wedged it open with a pebble. As they watched, he slipped a length of rattan cord through the cleft, and, putting the log on the sand with his foot on it, sawed vigorously through the cleft with the cord of rattan. Clouds of dense smoke rose immediately. By the time the rattan parted in two with the friction, there was a live coal in the dust in the cleft, which he fanned vigorously to a flame.

"Can't lose these Islanders at their own game!" laughed the Captain whimsically, as a fire was started in the brazier. He told the Javanese their plans.

"Me stop. Prenty *kai-kai* (eats) soon!" grinned

the sailor. "Fish, sago, cocoanut, when Cap-fellah come back!"

"Good! Marster will go-long, look-see," replied the Captain, answering in pidgin-English.

They took a bearing on a clump of palms across the lagoon, which seemed in the track of wreckage drift from the proa, and set out around the horn of the lagoon. Great red and orange land-crabs scuttled to their holes among the roots as they walked; herons and pelicans flew out of the mangroves and flapped across the lagoon; lizards flashed across their path. There was no sign of man whatever; the question of water would soon become pressing, the Captain noted, for this atoll was like any of hundreds like it, where land is gradually being built up out of the hundred-fathom sea by the coral polyps. It would be perhaps a century before the soil would be dense enough to hold any fresh water.

Half an hour brought them to the clump of palms across the lagoon. Father and son began to quarter the ground, carefully. It was hard to believe that any drift of fragments of the proa *had* passed that way. Not a vestige remained. The odd, floating bits had no doubt worked their way, on the restless waves, through the palm trunks and gone on out to sea. Caught, however, on the spikes of a shaggy sago palm, the grid of one of the bamboo outrigger platforms finally rewarded them, as a sign that wreckage *had* gone by.

There was no sign of the ship's water butt, nor of the house on deck.

"But, father," stamped George stubbornly, "that house on deck *can't* have gotten through these trees without leaving *something*!—I'll bet anything that it's somewhere in the lagoon. I'm going to swim out there."

"Sharks'll get you, son," warned the Captain. "I'd rather you wouldn't risk it."

"You get out as far as you can in the mangroves and stand guard with your automatic, and it'll be all right—I'm not afraid!" said the boy earnestly, beginning to strip.

Captain Sloan gave a reluctant consent. In a trice George was ready, and they pushed through the muddy belt of mangroves. The cool water felt good as he went overboard in a long fetch. He whooped and splashed, his heart singing with gladness, for this wild, vagabond, islander life was getting down to the eternal savage in his boy nature.

"Yon she is, dad!" he yelled. "She stranded atop the mangroves, to your left, and sank down in them with the tide. I can see the top of the roof from here."

"Swim to it, George, while I cover you from here. There's the fin of a shark, now, out in the lagoon. Hurry!" called the Captain.

"I smell him!" laughed George, shooting for the house in a smashing overhand drive. The rank odor of

watermelon came to his nostrils as he cleft his way through the still water. As he slid up on the thatch roof, the Captain's automatic cracked, and the surge of a wave swept through the mangrove stems. He turned, to see the white belly and gaping red maw of a nineteen-foot shark soaring by.

"Hi!" laughed the boy, twiddling his bare toes at him disdainfully. "Nothing didding, old-timer!"

The Cap'n came grunting through the mangroves; "I put a bullet through him, anyhow!" he wheezed. "Can you get inside the house?"

"Sure! Wait till I get busy with my clasp knife."

George pulled on the lanyard, and his heavy, sailor's clasp knife, with its broad, blunt end, came up out of the depths of his white jacket. He cut a square hatch hole in the roof and peered down.

"Everything's here, dad!" he sang out cheerily. "There's the chest, and our mess kit and bedding. Stand by, while I dive for 'em."

He slipped down inside, and, standing on the bamboo grid floor of the house, passed out all their belongings. They got them across the mangroves and spread them out on the sand under the palms.

"Gee! I'm thirsty already, dad!" exclaimed George. "Shall I swarm up a tree and throw down some nuts?"

"Wait! There's a little water in my canteen," said the Cap'n, shaking it. "Enough for you and me. Lord love you, child, but I despise cocoanut water!"

They divided the canteen and then opened the chest. It had shipped a good deal of water, so the Cap'n busied himself in carefully opening the wet pages of his Almanac and his copy of the "South Seas Mariner's Record," so that the sun could dry them out. The chest held two cutlasses, spare ammunition for the automatics, the sextant, a boat compass, fishing tackle, and a spare suit of clothes for the Cap'n, all waterlogged. The Cap'n pulled his chronometer out of his vest fob by its leather lanyard.

"Near noon, now, son. We'll take a latitude sight, now. You hold the watch and give me noon."

George dried off the sextant and took a couple of preliminary sights. "Ready, father—stop!" he called as the second hand crept around to noon. They read the vernier.

" $30^{\circ} 25' 15''$ South," rumbled the Cap'n, subtracting it from 90° . "Declination on January 26th, which is to-day, about 25 degrees. Look it up in the tables, son, but be careful with that wet paper."

George read out the declination and they subtracted it from the reading.

"That leaves $5^{\circ} 1' 32''$ South of the equator, boy," declared the Cap'n, marking the figures in the sand with a small stick. "That puts us on the Ke' side. We must be on one of those little atolls between Boön and Ke'. Must have drifted south out of our course quite a bit."

"Ke'!" ejaculated the boy savagely. "Can't we ever get away from that place!"

"Better'n nowhere, son!" retorted the Cap'n philosophically. "We'll build a raft out of the two outriggers, and rig a sail from what's left over from the proa mats, then navigate along these islets until we reach Ke'. It's the home of the greatest boat-builders in the Archipelago; mought be we can get some one to sail us over to Amboina from there."

The boy's face brightened. "Build a raft! Gee, what a lark! Come on—le's go! I'm keen for that, dad! And, right now, I'm hungry enough to eat a shark!"

They repacked the chest, hung the cutlasses on their belts, and draped their partly-dried blankets over their shoulders. Each taking a handle of the chest, they set out around the horn of the lagoon again, planning on the making of the raft, as they walked.

Arrived at camp, they found the Javanese had caught a mess of fish in the lagoon and the cook was already baking sago bread on a flat stone. He had driven in flat planks from the proa deck in the sand around the fire, and on each was pinned a steak of fish, browning and sizzling deliciously in the heat of the beach fire. George yawned cavernously and fell on his portion with devouring jaws the minute the sago bread was ready to break. Washed down with cocoanut water, it made a satisfying meal.

"Now, then, men," said the Captain, in Malay, when the meal was finished, "we're going to make a raft out of the outriggers and get away from here, right sudden! Turn to!"

"Going, sar!" grinned the sailor, and they tackled the work with a will.

The outriggers were long, hollow trunks of bamboo that would float like corks, and the one jammed in the tree had its broken lengths of outrigger beams lashed to it. The other the Javanese had found in the mangroves, where its heavy iron-wood beam had stuck down and caught in the bushes, anchoring it. Hauling them to the lagoon beach, they laid them side by side and lashed the beams across. On them went three of the proa deck planks for a platform, and, with this as a mast step, the Cap'n and George rigged a lateen sail out of the spars and mats of the proa. By evening the raft was ready for a trial cruise. She proved fairly able, and, with a paddle split out of a plank and whittled roughly into shape, she steered and tacked "without makin' *much* more leeway than headway!" as Captain Sloan put it.

Next morning they put aboard a store of cocoanuts, filled the canteens with water from more of them, and made up a pack of sago bread and cooked fish. By noon they were ready to sail. The Cap'n motioned for the Javanese and the cook to hop aboard.

To his utter astonishment they hung back, giggling

and digging in the sand with their toes like a pair of embarrassed children.

"What's the matter with ye—all aboard, men! We gotto get movin'!" ordered the Cap'n testily.

The Javanese tittered and hung back, sheepishly: "Me stop. Prenty eats; prenty nuts; black-boy he come, some day," he objected.

"What! You going to stay here, marooned for the Lord knows how long!" barked the Cap'n incredulously. "Hop aboard, man!"

The Javanese shook his head. "We-fellahs stop. Shark, him *kai-kai* you-marster, if litty wind he come. Boat, him no good."

No amount of argument could move them. The islanders preferred to stay where they were until a canoe should come that way and take them off. The Cap'n knew enough of their nature not to urge them further. This life suited them!

"Wal'r—good luck to ye!" he grunted at length. "Shove off, boys!" The raft sail filled and she gathered headway, leaving the Javanese waving farewells on the shore. The Cap'n and George headed out through the gate of the lagoon to the open sea, and then set a course for Ke' by their boat compass.

"It's about seventy miles from here to the anchorage at Kar, son. We're doin' mebbe four knots. Ought to reach there in two days if no storm comes up," averred the Cap'n as George trimmed home the sheet.

Slowly the atoll sank down into the sea astern, but before they had lost sight of it, the palm tops of another loomed up over the horizon ahead. There was a whole chain of these atolls, mere specks on the chart, between them and Ke'. The raft slid and wallowed on the long swells, but she bowled along, slow but sure. The Cap'n sniffed the salt air as he steered.

"I smell shark, son!—there he is, now. We ought to collect nearly every one in the Banda Sea before we get through," he laughed. He pointed over to where a great triangular fin jutted out of a wave slope. The big fellow was paralleling their course. Presently there was a moist, slimy cough in the sea and another one rose, just astern, turned over on his white belly and gaped his jaws open as he sheared by.

"*Wouldn't* you like us! Just *wouldn't* you!" taunted George from his safe roost on the sea chest. "We'll have a ring of them around us soon, dad!" He drew his automatic and plunked at the one passing to starboard. The monster gave a flip of his tail and dived, the shower of water from his great propellor splashing all over them.

"Don't waste ammunition on them, George," warned Cap'n Jack. "We're all right,—unless a choppy blow comes on. They may rush us if the seas go over the raft, and then we'll want all the ammunition we've got."

He held course, and the raft drove steadily on, rising

the atoll ahead, while the ring of sharks that had now gathered played and wallowed in circles about them. By evening they had sailed around the coast of the atoll, entered its lagoon, and run ashore in the mangroves.

"Some mariners we are, dad!" crowed George as they stepped ashore. "Here's fresh water—at last!"

"Where? I don't see any water!" growled the Cap'n. "This atoll's considerable larger than the other, but she won't have a drop of it on her, and you can lay to that, son!"

"Yes, there is—look at these thorn trees, father!" cried George cheerfully. The undergrowth of the palms here consisted of thickets of dense thorns and tough, gnarly iron-wood. "Air plants, father, see 'm!"

The boy pointed into the dense snarls of brier and small branches that filled the thorns. In them grew green air-plants, their curved leaves branching out like a pineapple. George swarmed up and tilted the first one over his hat. Out of the bases of the leaves trickled nearly a cupful of rain water, and made a little pool in the bottom of his hat. He passed it down.

"Drink, father—drink hearty! There's lots of them. We'll fill both canteens."

The old man licked his lips and wiped his mustache. "Gosh, son, that's the sweetest drink in the world—how I despise that cocoanut water!"

He set about making a fire, while George climbed

valiantly among the thorns, robbing the air-plants of their store. By the time the fish was hot, he had filled both canteens. They ate hearty and then turned in on a bed of dry leaves, raked up from under the thorn thickets.

At dawn they were under way again and sailing out of the atoll, gliding along before the steady monsoon. Their friends, the sharks, picked them up out in the open sea again, following the raft as is their custom. Two big ones in particular became insolently bold, rubbing against the trunks of the bamboo and eyeing them balefully as they turned over to sweep by.

"Jerusha's Cats!" exclaimed the Cap'n scornfully. "If them critters had any sense, they'd just sheer under us and capsize us, like a whale would. It's sure a wise provision of Nature that they can't reason none! Well, we ought to raise Ke' out of the sea to-day. Le's take a time-sight an' git our longitude."

They took the sun's bearing by compass when it bore dead east, and read the hour angle with the sextant. Comparing this with the Captain's little chronometer and working out the tables, they figured Long. $132^{\circ} 45' 20''$ East, doing the sum on the proa plank deck.

"Goin' strong, son! We make Ke' to-night if the wind holds!"

"It's doing more than that, it's freshening," said

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George. "There's a storm off to the north, somewhere. Haven't you noticed the swells getting larger?"

"Yep, but she'll ride it—never worry! We ought to run into some fishing canoes out from Ke' pretty soon, anyway," retorted the Cap'n. "Go it, old girl!"

The raft dipped and soared as the catspaws came thicker and harder, and her speed crept up to a triumphant six knots. They passed two atolls to starboard without making for either of them, and then, out of a cloudbank to the east, there gradually developed the dim white outlines of the high mountains of Ke'.

"Land ho!" hailed the Cap'n, bluffly, his practised eyes seeing it first. "Dead ahead! Can you make it out, son?"

"Looks just like a picture coming out on a photographic plate!" cried George. "Gee, only a little while ago we were crazy to get away from there—*Stand by!*"

His warning shout was caused by the break of a whitecap which snarled down the slope of a wave and rolled right over the raft, wetting down everything. She drove through it like a fish. Unsinkable, it would be wet going; but they would reach Ke'—sure as fate!

"Man that bamboo pole, George!" ordered the Cap'n. "I don't mind a bit of sea boarding us, but we're in for a time now with them sharks!"

The raft surged down into a hollow and the wave

crests shut them in. She labored up the slope, to jam into the smother of whitecap that curled over and sent its water swirling around their feet.

“Look out!—Stand by!” yelled the Cap’n.

Out of the wave slope jutted the long, gray snout of a shark! He rammed them close aboard and his mouth snapped shut as it slewed across their platform. The Cap’n dodged, while George jabbed at him with the bamboo pole. Then the Cap’n fired his pistol and the big gray fellow shot on ahead and sounded, his tail smashing spray into their faces.

“They’re getting bold, boy—fire whenever you see one!” said the Cap’n, gritting his teeth grimly. He leveled his pistol and drove a shot into the white belly of another, soaring by to port. George fired at him the same moment, and a smudge of dark red discolored the blue sea. For a moment the shark hung, belly up, seemingly stunned, while George cheered and yelled with delight. The raft swept on, leaving him astern. Then there was a commotion in the sea, as two of the monsters attacked their wounded comrade. They bit and tore at him; more joined in, and, receding rapidly in their wake, a bloody sea orgy ensued.

“If we can do *that*, every time, we’ll hold them at bay like a pack of wolves till Kingdom Come!” barked the Cap’n. “Three more hours will land us at Kar, at this rate.”

For a time they were fully occupied in navigating

the raft. She could not tack, because the force of the wind put the lee bamboo trunk far under water, making a fine slope up which a shark could slide with ease; but she *could* drive dead before the wind, and it lifted her along in great swoops that would have been grand riding were it not for the sinister menace that swam back there in their wake. George stood on the platform, pole in hand, watching the waves anxiously.

"Here they come—two this time—Shoot, dad!"

The Cap'n whirled around and fired, putting down the nearest. Its mate sounded instantly and there was a tense moment when father and son looked at each other, wondering when and where it would come up next.

"Boarding!—to starboard!" bawled the Cap'n, firing point blank as fast as he could pull trigger.

George caught one glimpse of two malignant green eyes glaring at him out of the sea, and then a gaping red maw, lined with double rows of saw teeth, opened upon him. He jabbed the pole deep into the shark's mouth as its head swept across the platform. Its jaws closed and the bamboo crackled like paper. The whip of it yanked the pole out of his hands and hurled the youth sprawling upon the planks. He would have gone overboard, had not the Cap'n grabbed his collar in a burly fist.

"Avast, there—bully boy! You done fine, son!"

You gave him more of that pole than he bargained for, you did! He's gone.”

George scrambled to his feet. The shark was thrashing about furiously astern, striving to get the pole out of his mouth. Red splotches marked the sea-foam, where the Cap'n's bullets bled. He was done for, like a harpooned whale, and they looked back, to see him the target of two of his bloodthirsty mates, who were devouring him piecemeal.

“But—next time, father?” George was shaking all over. It seemed to him that this game *could* not keep up! Without a fending pole——

“There ain't goin' to *be* any next time, boy. Look yonder, off our starboard bow!” grinned the Cap'n. “Canoe ahoy! See 'em comin'?”

Two long black canoes loomed up ahead. Their bows rose high on the swells, to crash down, sending white plumes of spray twenty feet up from each side of their bows. An immense figurehead, decorated with cassowary hair and cowrie shells, rode high above the sharp prows. At least twenty paddles in each one drove them on, and a deep singing chant came to their ears across the windswept waters.

“Ke' Islanders. Papuan niggers, they are, but harmless—great boat-builders, I've always heard,” declared the Cap'n.

“How about your bag of pearls, dad?” queried

George, anxiously, and there was much misgiving in his tones.

The Cap'n winked. "George, did you ever see your old pappy takin' any ondue chances with our hard-won fortune? I'd trust none of these natives, son. Here we are, two white men against forty blackbirds. They may strip us of everything we have; an' again, they may not. You can't tell. When we set out from the atoll I figgered on something just like this——"

"Where are the pearls, then, dad? They'll find 'em, sure!" groaned George, unable to restrain his impatience any longer.

"No, they won't! They're up in that cocoanut tree on the atoll, son!" laughed the Cap'n, slapping his knee hilariously. "An' there they'll stay, until we're fixed to go for 'em in a legitimate manner—that is, in command of our own ship and with people we can trust. Savvy?"

George laughed outright. "Up in your cocoanut tree!" he cackled. The thought of the Javanese sailor and the cook marooned within fifty feet of vast wealth, tickled his soul. Sure, his father was a canny old scout! He had wondered why the Cap'n had slept so soundly near those two natives while on the atoll, for both of them knew all about the pearls and how their own Javanese captain had lost his life trying to steal them. Now he knew!

"Great stuff, father! I suppose you marked the tree

somehow. Gee, that atoll will get named in the Mariner's Record as 'Pearl Atoll,' I'm thinkin'!"

"Sure! We've got a good bank, there, until some of this Crusoe business is over with. I've got forty dollars in gold, and that ought to get us a passage to Amboina. Then I know a schooner captain or two who will sail us over to Boön—— Hist! The niggers are signaling us!"

The foremost canoe had stopped paddling and her crew were yelling and gesticulating at them. The Captain stood up and roared something at them in Malay. They dipped their paddles furiously, throwing up showers of spray and singing as they came. They were just in time, for a large fin cut the water to port and its owner circled, preparatory to rushing the raft. The Sloans fired at it, rapidly, and then the canoe swept down and the shark dived, frightened down by the splash of many paddles.

A row of mop-haired, grinning savages chattered at them in a Papuan dialect, while the Captain shouted back his wants in Malay, and then tried *beché de mer*, seeing that they did not understand him. An old sinner, with nothing on him but a string around his middle, finally answered in a wonderful *beché de mer*.

"Me-fellah, Oku! Orang-kaya! (chief)" he introduced himself. "Captain-fellah, him stop long Ke'?"

"Sure! Me plenty buy'm proa," averred the Captain.

"Black-boy him take marster in canoe? Raft, him plenty small, too much. No good!"

They veered alongside, and the sea chest was lifted aboard. Then abandoning the raft to its fate, the canoe swung around and headed for the tall headlands of Ke'.

CHAPTER III

BEACHED ON KE'

The two long black native canoes swept rhythmically landward, while the towering mountains of Ke' rose out of the sea, shrouded in mists, high over their heads. Captain John Sloan and George, his son, sat together on a wide rear thwart, watching the landfall curiously.

"Hosts of Pharaoh, son, but we've been through a lot since we sighted her on that Javanese proa, eh?" rumbled the old Cap'n, voicing George's unspoken thoughts.

"You bet!" replied his son, his blue eyes twinkling with reminiscences. "The big question now is, how are we ever going to get away from here? Have you sounded Oku about a passage to Amboina?"

"Yep. He's heard of the place, and that's about all. These niggers are boat-builders, but they never navigate further than over to Aru, and there's no use going there. We couldn't buy a steamer passage with my forty dollars; besides, a steamer don't touch there but once in a dog's age. Looks like we'd have to buy a proa and sail her over ourselves."

George watched the line of mop-haired black paddlers swinging to their stroke, as he thought over their chances. Old Oku, their chief, sat astern of them, his wrinkled face scanning the channel through the coral reefs as he guided the steering paddle. The Ke' Islanders were a happy lot, chanting in occasional spontaneous bursts of song as they paddled, and entirely contented with their lot. Their grand forests gave them plenty of timber, and every native captain in the Archipelago came here to buy boats of them. To leave their home for a long three-hundred-mile voyage to Amboina across the Banda Sea would be farthest from their ideas, George felt, putting himself in their place. It would be hard to ship even one man for a crew, he realized. Still, with a small proa that two could manage, they might get across alone if no storm or squall came upon them. But, then, the currents, and the chain of islets reaching from Ceram nearly to Ke'—how could they manage to sail through them without being wrecked on some little atoll like the one they had just escaped from?

He gave it up, leaving their troubles to his father, the Captain, and contented himself with curiously surveying their wild, strange surroundings. The canoe that they were in delighted him. It was built of three whole tree trunks, hollowed out to make a keel and two curving sides. It was perhaps forty feet long, with thwarts every six feet, and the planks were

doweled together along their edges and held in place by flexible iron-wood ribs lashed to inside projections on the planks, just as in the construction of the larger proas. The canoe's stern was open to the sea, and a long steering oar ran out through it. A naked native was squatting on the oar, his legs tangled around it, and his back and sides filling the gap in the stern so that the following seas that curled up astern were stopped by his own body. Plenty of water was getting in, at that, but a wet boat meant nothing to these naked islanders!

The sun was setting as they ran in under the headlands of Ke'. Light limestone cliffs rose abruptly from the shore, with screw pines (pandanus) bordering their tops. A magnificent tropical forest clothed the high mountains stretching endlessly southward, and the beaches were of dazzling white sands, with cocoa palms bending and waving on the shore. The shelving bottom, under a crystal sea, shaded from emerald green to blue lapis-lazuli to deepest ultramarine. For forty feet down they could see the coral growth studding the bottom, over which the canoe glided like a ship on a mirror.

Captain Sloan grunted his thanks to Oku for their rescue from the raft, and they stepped ashore among the crowd of natives that had come down to the landing. The crew busied themselves pitching fish ashore, seized with howls of delight by the women and children

whenever they could tear themselves away from staring at the strange clothing of the two white men. George and his father left the crowd and followed their sea chest, carried on the broad shoulders of an obliging native, to a line of low sheds which fringed the beach. Behind it were the thatch huts of the village of Kar, nestling in a grove of palm trees.

Under the sheds were proas in all stages of construction, the mop-haired Islanders using no other tools than axes, adzes and augers, yet producing as fine fits as ever went into a plank at Gloucester—as even the Sloans had to admit. The long curved planks were hewn out of the solid log, shaped to fit the future boat. At intervals a raised lug was left along the inside of each plank, and, so shaped, gangs of husky young natives were dragging them in out of the forest. The edges of these planks were hewn to a hair-line fit and fastened together by hard-wood dowel pins, like the leaves of a table. Then pliant ribs were sprung into place under the projections and lashed to them with rattan, and the deck beams were driven into shallow notches cut in the uppermost plank. Finally, the outrigger beams, curved downward like huge bows, were lashed into notches cut in the gunwales, and the outriggers of big hollow trunks of bamboo were secured at the outer ends with upstanding crotches of hard-wood lashed to beam and outrigger. Not an iron nail or plank went into the proa anywhere; the whole boat

was built of native materials, of native design and workmanship, and had been since time immemorial.

George and his father searched the sheds for a pona that would be small enough for them. Old Oku, the head boat-builder, followed them around with a small, keen finishing adze in his hand. He would not talk of sailing them over to Ambaina at all, but there seemed some hope of buying a small pona outright from him. They finally selected one about thirty feet long, nearly finished.

"How much you sell him for, my lad?" asked Cap'n Sloan, pointing it out.

Oku pondered for some time. Then, speaking with lips and fingers, he conveyed the information that a small brass cannon, twenty yards of calico cloth, two dozen white plates and three gongs was her price.

"My soul, lad!" stifled the Cap'n, when he had got this straight. "Here—these gold pieces are worth all them things put together. Take 'em, and we'll take that gurry-kid of a craft off your hands." He held out his two twenty-dollar gold pieces and urged them on the old Papuan boat-builder.

The latter shook his head and pointed to his own ears. From each dangled a gold earring. These coins were only good for ornaments, he signified.

George's bright blue eyes had been examining the earrings keenly. They were old pieces of eight, he could see, even at that distance.

"Where you get him earring, Oku?" he asked, breaking into the conversation.

The old native grinned.

"Me have'm long, long time. My father, my old father (grandfather), him have'm. *Kai-kai* (eat) prenty white man, long, long time 'go."

Further questioning brought out that about twenty of these gold "ornaments" would buy the proa, although Oku was reluctant to sell at any such low price!

The Cap'n turned away in despair.

"The durned, ignorant cannibal!" he muttered to George. "He's askin' four hundred dollars in gold, when I could buy the hull proa with ten dollars' wuth of gimcracks! This is all the money we have, son. Gosh, we're sure beached in a heathen land! Danged if we've got a single thing to trade!"

They went back to where they had left the sea chest, and opened it. There was nothing worth trading inside. Cap'n Sloan's brass sextant in its mahogany box, a boat compass, two cutlasses and the spare ammunition for the automatics, a copy of the "South Seas Mariner's Record" and a nautical almanac, fishing tackle and some spare clothes, were all it contained. Valueless on Ke'!

They were hungry and dejected. Penniless beach-combers. The Cap'n finally traded his clasp knife for some sago bread, yams, a fish and some pork, and they

made their campfire out under the cocoa palms a little way along the beach.

After they had eaten, they sat before the fire considering what to do next. George got out the copy of the "Mariner's Record," reading it by the firelight to look up what notes had been made on Ke'. The very first item caught his eye and held it.

"KE'; Jan., 1710. Portuguese galleon, *Salvator Maria*, D. Vaccarro master, driven ashore in Lat. 7° 27' S. by typhoon. Crew eaten by cannibals. One boat, G. Viseppe, mate, reached Amboina in terrible straits after rowing three hundred miles. May, 1756, English bark, *Mary Bunby*——"

"Stop!" interrupted the Cap'n. "Read that again, about that there Guinea galleon."

George read it over, slowly; and then they both sat and looked at one another, long and thoughtfully.

"Do you think the wreck *could* still be there, father?" asked George at length, the light of adventure beginning to shine again in his eyes.

"Mought—and again, mought not be," ruminated the Cap'n. "After two hundred years, son! . . . Depends on how she struck. . . . Crew got ashore and were massacred, you say?"

"No; eaten," corrected George. "It tallies up with old Oku's story, though, dad!" he exclaimed excitedly. "And those pieces of eight he wore for earrings! Oh, let's do it, father—please!" he begged. "Let's go

down to Lat. $7^{\circ} 27'$ South—you can find it with your sextant—and see what we find!”

“Mought as well—as stay here,” exclaimed the Cap’n at length. “Jerusha’s Cats, we’ll starve if we git to beach-combin’. I’m old, but I can still hike around in the jungle. We can shoot guinea fowl and wild pig, and I can fish, and we’ll make sago bread from the palms, and there’s plenty of wild bananas—it’s the thing to do, son!”

“Hurray, dad!” yelled George delightedly. “Le’s go!”

He sought a bed in the shavings under the boat shed that night, all excitement, and with a lighter heart than he had known since the wreck of their pearl schooner, the *Kawani*. To live in the wild jungle, care free, yet with a possibility of treasure-trove at the end of it, appealed to every adventurous drop of blood in him. Far better, this, than the hopeless lingering of the beach-comber, getting poorer and poorer, waiting for a chance ship that might never come!

Next morning at dawn they were up and had cached the sea chest out in the forest. Out of it they took only the sextant, cutlasses, automatics and fishing tackle. The Cap’n insisted on a trip to the boat-shed grindstone to sharpen his cutlass before starting, but George, with the indolence of youth, contented himself with merely turning the wheel for him and not

taking the time to sharpen his own, so eager was he to be off.

The whole island of Ke' is mountainous, stretching for sixty miles north and south in ranges three to four thousand feet high. Bold promontories of lava rock edge its shores, indented with little bays of clean white sand. With plentiful groves of cocoa palms growing just above the white line of the beach, and wild pigs and guinea fowl in the jungle, no one need starve in that land of plenty!

Lat. $7^{\circ} 27'$ South lay some thirty miles down the coast. They made it in three marches, skirting along above the limestone cliffs, keeping as closely as possible in sight of the sea. On the third day George shot a wild pig, and, down on the beach near the carcass, where there was a small spring, they built a little hut of palm leaves, thatched over a slanting sapling. This was to be headquarters for their search, for the sextant had told them they were near the latitude of the wreck.

"Now for a noon sight, son!" said Cap'n Sloan, drawing out his chronometer, as twelve o'clock approached. He took the sextant out of its box and began making preliminary sights with it.

"Give me noon, lad," he ordered, as George stood by with the little chronometer in hand. "I wouldn't trade that old timepiece for all the proas in Christendom! With it, an' the sex. and our boat compass,

we can manage to navigate over to Amboina, some time this century."

"Ready!—Stop!" called George, as the little second-hand crept around to noon. The Cap'n shot the sun, subtracting the declination taken from a handy vest-pocket table book.

"H'm—we're in Lat. $7^{\circ} 26'$ South boy," he mused, reading the vernier. "She ought to be in this little bight to the s'uth'd, or the next one—'lowin' for errors in them old wooden quadrants they used to have in them days. But let's make camp, first; we got to fix up a sort of home, son, for we may be a long time lookin' for your wreck."

They dressed George's pig, after Herculean efforts in hauling it out of the jungle. Then the Cap'n insisted on building a drying frame, to cure as much meat as possible before it could spoil. George, consumed with impatience, ran off to climb the nearest heights for a look-see, leaving the Cap'n making an improvised drying rack.

The boy swarmed up the lava slopes with eager haste. The going was rough and severe in the extreme, for all the rocks were of porous, honeycombed lava that bit into shoe leather and tore his fingers as he climbed. He finally reached a high lookout rock commanding the whole bay below him.

Through the transparent waters he could see the bottom of the bay spread out like a map below him.

It was dotted with dense patches of huge coral leaf, pearly and rosy in the sunlight. Sea urchins moved their spiny dots slowly over the clean white sand; seaweed in every hue of green filled the interstices between sunken lava boulders. But there was no sign whatever of any wreck. Not a thing lay anywhere in the bottom of that bay that could possibly be construed as the work of ship-builders.

Disappointed, he looked south. Maybe the old quadrant *was* accurate, then; or perhaps the survivors had taken the latitude from the chart. The next headland to the south was at least three miles further on; the minute yet remaining from their observation would be more than covered by that distance. George hesitated yet a few moments more, before descending to camp. What had stopped him was the sinister vision of two large sharks, which swam lazily into the bay and sheered idly over the banks of coral and the leafy network of marine growth, in search of small fish. They swam out again, shooting along with the speed of submerged canoes, a single flip of their huge tails sending them forty feet through the water.

"Gee!" muttered the boy, as he watched them apprehensively, recalling the raft they had built on Pearl Atoll. "More sharks! If that wreck is still there, it must be in deep water, all grown over with coral ferns. We'll have to build a raft; and then—say,—I've got

to dive! Ugh! One of those big fellows'll come in, sure!—and no one to help me, down there!

The thought made him nervous as he climbed down to camp. He knew from experience how bold and dangerous sharks were with a single swimmer. His imagination conned over a fight with one of those big-jawed demons, all alone, and he could see nothing at all cheerful about it. The pearl divers of Ceylon were safe enough from sharks; there were so many of the black boys that the commotion they made scared away any chance visitor. But, one boy, all alone! Even if he got down to the wreck, what could he do, what could he find of any value in the brief sixty seconds of breath allowed him?

He came back to camp, subdued and discouraged, humbly glad to help his father with the curing. The old Cap'n was stubborn, and when he seized an idea he held to it through thick and thin. That idea, his principal idea, was food for them and plenty of it. They might not get a chance at another pig. How wise were the gray hairs of age!

The Cap'n had built a fine smoke house of palm leaves while he had been away, and in it hung great flitches of bacon, hams, and long strips of tenderloin. It would take at least two days of smoking to cure them, but it was worth it, for it gave them the priceless boon of independence. George, putting aside his impatience over the wreck, turned to, to help in col-

lecting provisions. He made a rope of palm fiber, and with a loop of it around his waist, ascended the cocoa palms and threw down a store of nuts. Then he found a ripe sago palm growing in the little swamp behind their beach, and managed to cut out sufficient of the pith with his clasp knife to make a quantity of sago bread. This fibrous pith he first pounded and then soaked in water, the starchy jelly from it being dried over the fire in one of their mess tins. This he pounded to a flour and baked on flat stones.

"Wal'r, George boy,—now I'm beginnin' to feel like one of these here cannibal kings!" ejaculated Cap'n Jack, as they surveyed all their wealth of food on the third day. "But—no beach-combin' for us! We mought's well be a-lookin' for the old Guinea boat."

"Oh, boy!" chirped George, strapping on his cutlass. "Le's go! S'pose we *do* find a lot of gold, father? It'll be worth nothin' here. Old pieces of eight are no good anywhere, now. Who'll change 'em?"

"Gold is gold, son. It's wuth sixteen dollars an ounce, no matter who stamps it. We can buy that little proa with twenty pieces, or we can stay on here till the proas come; show any captain enough gold, and he'll take you anywhere—but, son, we ain't found your wreck, yit!"

"Do you really think there'll be anything left of it—

after two hundred years, dad?" asked George, incredulously, as they walked along the beach.

"'Pends on how she struck. They got off in the boats; that means a sand beach, not rocks. Ran her ashore in one of these bays, I'm figgerin'."

They had cached the provisions on a bamboo pole, to keep them clear of ants, and were carrying only two days' rations, the sextant and their cutlasses and automatics. The march to the point to southward, skirting the shore, seemed more like ten miles than three. Every little indentation had to be scanned, and scanned from a height, to make sure before going on. They came at last to the point. It proved to be the end of a bold promontory jutting out to sea, and, turning it, a long coast line spread out *due west* for twenty miles! The noon sight showed that it was *all* in Lat. $7^{\circ} 27'$ South; for they were on the horn of the deep bight that crooks Ke' from this point south!

What a tiny, insignificant thing is a ship, compared to the vast landscapes of Nature! George felt a sinking sense of utter discouragement, as he viewed this long stretch of coast with hopeless eyes.

"Fat chance of finding anything here!" he groaned. "We'll be days and days searching this!"

The Cap'n, however, perked up.

"Sword of Jehoshaphat, son! This looks like business!" he chortled, looking along the coast with sparkling eyes. "This here's jest the sort of landfall I'd

have made, myself, if I'd been master of that Guinea packet! Typhoon druv them ashore, you say? Then the wind come from the east'ard. Skipper has, maybe, one close-reefed fores'l set, and runs along this coast lookin' for a place to run her nose into, before he gits smashed ag'in them rocks to the west. What does he do? Picks him the first place where the's a leetle p'int of rocks juttin' out, to get behind the lee of it afore he strikes. There's a p'int, now!—see it, two miles on alongshore. That's the place *I'd* pick!"

He hurried along, George catching some of his enthusiasm, too. The coast here had a narrow, stony beach, with the mountains rising in abrupt slopes for two to three thousand feet, and covered with a dry jungle growth. The going was fairly easy, and in half an hour they had reached the point. Climbing high on the rocks, they looked carefully over its sandy bottom—but there was nothing there! It was a little sheltered bay, though, an ideal refuge for a hard-driven ship.

"I don't jest figger this out," fretted the Cap'n, scratching his gray locks. "Comin' in from the sea, ridin' a typhoon, with mebbe pumps goin' and the ship laborin'—the skipper'd run for this place, sure! But there hain't no wreck here, that's certain!"

George's young eyes had been searching every foot of the shore after a careful examination of the bottom

of the bay. "Yes—there *was*, father; look!" he cried, pointing with outstretched arm.

The Cap'n followed it, until his eyes rested on something white and rectangular in shape, half buried in the dry chapparal a short distance up the mountain side.

"Wal'r—'tain't a rock; and 'tain't a tree!" he declared, judgmatically. "Strike my pennants if it ain't—say, it's a—piece of—our *wreck*!" he groaned, bitter disappointment welling up in his tones.

"Looks that way!" sighed George. "Some whopper of a south gale smashed her all up, long ago."

They hurried over and climbed up into the brush. Wedged firmly into a cleft in the lava boulders, was a weather-scoured piece of a ship. Perhaps ten feet long by six wide, the splintered ends of oak ribs juttied out between thick ceiling and skin planks, bolted through with dozens of rusty iron drifts driven through ribs and planks. Carried high on the crest of some mighty comber, it had been hurled inland—all that was left of the *Salvator Maria*.

They sat down, sick at heart. George wished that he could turn his face to the rocks and die. All his dreams of treasure-trove, of a triumphant homecoming, vanished in thin air at the silent testimony of this fragment of what was once a noble ship. He could see nothing before them but years of this Robinson Crusoe existence, beach-combers, or else to build another raft and try to get back to Pearl Atoll—

but then, where would they be! It all seemed a more and more hopeless puzzle.

"Wal'r, that's that!" puffed the more philosophic Cap'n, dismissing their troubles with one huge sigh. "Don't you worry, son," he soothed, putting his arm tenderly about George's shoulders. "'Tain't so bad. We got lots to eat, an' a roof over our heads. All we got to do is to exist, and eat hearty till the proas come back to Kar. Mebbe one of them captains will trade me my sextant for a trip to Macassar. Then I'll get some captain I know to sail me to Pearl Atoll. We're all right, son."

George shook him off, rebelliously. It all seemed too far in the future for him. He wanted things to happen *now*! He had inherited some of the Cap'n's stubbornness, too, and he wanted this dream that he had lived on, taking for granted that there *would* be a wreck, to come true. Hope died hard within him; impatiently he spurned the thought of all those dreary months of inaction and uncertainty. Under the dull ache of disappointment his mind wore itself out, until, without moving again, he dozed off in the sun. The Cap'n set about getting something cooked, preferring to let the boy sleep off his reaction of despair. He would wake, full of new ideas and new resolutions, the old man knew.

He was not disappointed. It was three hours later, and the tide in the little bay had gone out, leaving the

sandy bottom wet and full of puddles when George woke again. He looked about, bewildered, and then, as his eyes lit on the fragment of the wreck, memory returned.

"Huh! Just the same, father, we aren't going to leave here without kicking around this bay to see what we can find!" he exclaimed brightly. "Gimme some of that pork—I'm famished!"

Cap'n Sloan smiled cheerily as he handed him his portion of roast meat and sago bread.

"No use lookin', son; the niggers has found an' carried off every last thing from that wreck, long ago. You can see all there is from here."

It looked so. The bottom of the bight contained patches of coral, huge pearl clams and horned whelks scattered about on the clean sand. Whatever there was of gold or ship's stores had either been carried off or buried by the ceaseless action of the sea.

"Well, it'll ease my mind if I do some exploring, anyway," laughed George, finishing off his meal in one huge bite. He ran down to the beach, leaving the Cap'n smoking and watching him quizzically.

The boy wandered around on the sand awhile, kicking over coral clumps, digging here and there with an empty clam shell, splashing into shallow pools of clear sea water, but not an article of human workmanship rewarded him. A sense that the thing was foolish child's-play gradually came over him—he might as well

be searching the beaches of Bass Rocks of Gloucester at home, so far as finding anything of value was concerned.

Farther and farther out he worked, coming at last to where the lazy surf washed over the outermost coral reefs. The marine growth was thick, here, and out of the coral jutted the edges of great pearl shells, partly open, exposing their lustrous white linings.

He was skipping from one slippery clump to another, and peering down into the deep channels of sea-scoured sand, when a distant shout from the Cap'n arrested him. George stopped with his hand to his ear, reluctant to turn back. The Cap'n was repeating his warning hail, when something whipped tight around his ankle! He hopped with astonished fright, but his leg refused to budge. Looking down, he saw a mottled gray tentacle wound around his leg! A second one crept around a rock and fastened itself around his free leg, as the boy raised a howl of fear that brought the Cap'n to his feet with a jump. George whipped out his cutlass and hacked frantically at the taut cords, but its dull edge rebounded as from so much rubber hose. Furiously he struck again, with all his might, goaded to fierce resistance by the irresistible pull of those skinny arms which were threatening to pull him off his feet.

A third tentacle wavered in the air before his face, and then whipped about his waist; and then, out of the

depths from under a great boulder, rose the round body of a giant devil-fish! The sea-foam parted around it, as the hideous face came to view, and more arms, dotted with suckers, darted toward him. George slashed at the enveloping tentacles in a frenzy of horror. The octopus rose steadily into the air, grunting like a hog and snapping its horn beak at him viciously. This new development almost paralyzed the boy with fright. He had never dreamed that a devil-fish was amphibious, could fight out in the open air and make noises like some savage four-footed creature! Its great round eyes looked at him with eager, hungry greed boiling in their depths. He was drawn in so close, now, that he devoted all his attention to stabbing wildly at the throat of the monster, but his sword point was stopped by an invulnerable armor as hard as clam shell.

Then the swift, bright flash of a cutlass sheared across his face, cutting three tentacles at once, while the Cap'n's burly arm hummed through the air for a second stroke. George had never realized the mighty strength of that old father of his! The keen blade cut him free like shearing so much blubber, and then a swift stab of the Cap'n's cutlass into the body of the octopus made him squeal like a wild pig. George, encouraged by the Cap'n's shouts, collected his wits and tried to jam his cutlass hilt into the open beak of the creature, while at the same moment a mighty slash

of his father's cutlass gashed its body nearly in two, and the yellow entrails fell tumbling into the sea. The devil-fish groaned, sighed and fell to the rocks, its tentacles still hanging grimly to the boy's ankles. Two resounding cuts severed them, and then the Cap'n grabbed George's arm.

"Did he hurt you! Did he bite you?" he roared, fiercely, scarce knowing what he was saying, and dragging the lad away from the writhing arms.

"Guess he didn't!" gasped the boy weakly. "It was all my fault, dad, for being too lazy to sharpen my cutlass—golly, but she was dull!"

"My stars!" grunted Cap'n Sloan. "He'd jest better *hadn't* tetch ye! You're all I've got in the world, sonny! But this old arm's knocked many a pert sailorman spinning, an' she's still good, boy—she's still good!" he chortled, gripping a forearm like a lean ham.

"Good enough to save my life, father!" grinned George, admiringly. "I'm all right!—and—say—I've got a hunch!" His eyes sparkled.

"What's your hunch, sonny?" twinkled the Cap'n, looking at him fondly. "You ready to quit this foolishness and git back to camp?"

"No, I ain't!" declared George stoutly. "See that groove, down there in the sand, leading to where this old devil-fish hung out? It's a regular sand-scour. S'pose something heavy got washed in there off the

wreck? And s'pose this old bird's been camping out here, over it, for cats knows how long? Eh?"

"Well, no niggers'd look there, that's sure! They're scairt to death of these here devil-fishes."

"Well, let *us* look, then!"

George sank to his knees and peered down into the deep water under the huge boulder. The welling tides of the surf scoured into and out of it ceaselessly, in invisible currents.

"There's something down there, father!" shouted George. "Look!"

Cap'n Sloan sighed, whimsically, and got down on his knees, with many a grunt.

"Dagged, if there ain't!—a big clump of head coral, son—that's all!" he grinned.

"Yes, but what's it growing on, that's the point! I'm going to see!" Whipping off his clothes, George dived down into the pool with his cutlass. He rammed its point under the coral and pried with all his might. Coming up to breathe, he tried it again, and the mass of marine growth came loose. Under it was a long rectangular object, thickly studded with anenomes and huge barnacles.

"That means wood, father!" cried George happily, coming up once more for air. "Barnacles'll take to wood, every time!"

Catching some of the boy's enthusiasm, the Cap'n stripped, too, and between them they pried the thing

loose from the sea growth that surrounded it. It rose to the surface in their arms, ominously light, even allowing for the buoyancy of the water.

"She's all et up by sea worms—but she's an old sea chest, all right!" declared Cap'n Sloan, as they scraped away the clusters of barnacles, coral, and small pearl oysters that studded its sides.

The top was a mere honeycomb, and the hinges and hasp long since reduced to mere splotches of rust. A whack with the cutlass opened the chest. Inside, it was packed full with tiny coral organisms, the limey deposits of which filled it as so much salt. Eagerly they pried down into the mass with the cutlasses. Little by little it came out, here a piece carrying with it the rusty outlines of an ancient pistol, its flint the only thing still intact; here, the network of cloth clothes imprinted on the coral cake; here, the green remains of gilt epaulettes, showing the chest to have belonged to some officer. A sliver of coral matrix came up next, bearing a line of buttons on its under face. They were in tolerable preservation, being of bronze, and on the green faces of them they could make out the imprint of tiny crowns.

"It's the Guinea ship, son!" whooped the Cap'n. "I know that Portuguese crown with the oval O around it, myself. We'll find somethin' wuth while, yet!"

They attacked the box savagely, its papery sides

falling away under the cutlass blows. The green relics of an astrolabe came out with the coral next, and then George gave a cry.

"Gold!—father!" he yelled.

Out of one corner of the block that represented the inside of the chest he had pried a canvas bag. Its weave alone was imprinted on the coral, but a solid mass of yellow coins, glued together with rusty iron salts, formed the core of the lump. Gold!—the one untarnishable, imperishable thing in all that mass of ruin! Its round discs shone dull yellow in the sunlight as they handled it.

The Cap'n hefted it, judgmatically.

"Twenty pounds, my lad! Little,—but she's heavy —pieces of eight, mebbe, but wuth sixteen dollars an ounce, about five thousand dollars. Now we got *everything* to live for, George boy! Le's go back to camp, eat hearty, and take it easy. Mebbe a ship'll take us off, anyway, if we h'ist a flagpole. Come July, we'll sure get a proa to Macassar, and then us for Pearl Atoll!"

George stood eyeing the body of the devil-fish, thoughtfully. Then he hacked off the tip of its beak with a blow of the Captain's cutlass.

"Nice souvenir for our what-not, back to Gloucester,—eh, father?" he grinned, pocketing it. "Le's go!"

CHAPTER IV

IN DYAK LAND

If it hadn't been for Migi, the further adventures of Captain John Sloan and his son George might have ended very differently. Three days after they had found the gold from the Portuguese wreck, he wandered into their camp on the east shore of Ke'. Out of the mountain jungles behind them he came, gaunt and famished; but a bravely cheerful grin spread over his yellow-brown features, and, as he approached, he eyed George with the freemasonry of one boy for another the world over. His brown almond eyes, set straight in his head like a Siamese, his faded *chawat* or loin cloth, embroidered with gold thread, his close-woven turban of silk studded with dull jewels that surmounted a bang of jet black hair, all proclaimed him a Dyak from Borneo, probably one of some rank. His thin, sensitive nose had evidently been following the enticing scent of liver and bacon into camp, for his engaging grin widened and he pointed to a caved-in stomach and put a forefinger down an empty mouth.

"My stars!" exploded the Cap'n. "A Dyak! In

this forsaken land of mop-haired niggers! Come in, boy! Give him all he can eat, George." George heaped up a pearl clam shell a foot in diameter with food, and the Dyak youth ate ravenously, pouring out his thanks in mixed Malay, pidgin English, and Iwan or Sea Dyak, for he knew all three languages. Then he drank down a whole gourd of water and wiped his lips.

"Me Migi," he explained, as if that told all.

"Awright, Migi!" grunted the Cap'n. "I guess we must have overlooked you at Kar. How come you beached on Ke'?"

A lugubrious expression overcast Migi's naturally merry features. "Long talk! Sad. Me tell him Malay tongue?" suggested the Dyak boy, politely.

"Sure! Fire away. We got nothin' *but* time on our hands—now!" exclaimed the Cap'n wearily.

"*Saya fikir!*" quoth Migi sententiously. "All right. My country, big land. Far over there," he explained, waving his arm over the sea to the west.

"Yes, yes; I know. Borneo. Drive on, lad."

"Me live Long House, far up river. *Big* river: Samanjang."

"Yep. East Dutch Borneo, that is," agreed the Cap'n.

"My father, him Tama Migi Bulieng. *Big* chief. Datu," went on Migi, proudly. "Plenty people. Happy. Much rice; many vases; plenty brass." He

paused, impressively. Then his face took on a tragic expression. "Three moons ago, fire-boat, him come. Shoot big gun. Fire stick (dynamite) him go *Boom!* Small gun, he talk all time. White man burn stockade. Burn Long House. Kill men, women, children!" He gritted his teeth. "Ugh! Plenty bad man! Dyak fight hard. Sumpitan, parang, kriss. But no can do!" he ended, despondently.

"What in the nation had your tribe done to deserve all this?" demanded the Cap'n curiously. "Been head hunting?"

"No, no! No head!" Migi shook his own vigorously. "My people do nothing a-tall! Dyak go down river in canoe; but fire-boat, him stop!" he nodded his head triumphantly.

"What's that? The gunboat couldn't, or didn't, follow you?" questioned the Cap'n astonished.

"No can do! Dyak, him cut down big tapang tree. Fall 'cross river. Boat him in trap. All stop. No *can* go down river!" grinned Migi.

The Cap'n pondered awhile as this situation built itself up in his mind. He looked over at George. The boy's eyes blazed like stars; he, too, was thinking over what this might mean to them. The Dyaks had captured a small freebooters' steamer, evidently. She was forfeit and would be condemned. Why not go there with a Dutch magistrate, assist in the capture of these outlaws—and buy the boat for a home for themselves?

"Sword of Jehoshaphat, why those people were little better than pirates!" growled the Cap'n, while George sniffed his contempt for such renegades of his own race. "Attacking an unarmed Dyak village that-a-way! If the Dutch Government should ever hear of it! It's a pity they can't police their territory as the English do in Sarawak. What sort of a flag did this white fire-boat carry, lad?"

Migi looked mystified, so the Cap'n drew a picture of a flag in the sand. Migi shook his head. "No got flag. Bad mans! Will sell the Dyak op'm—how you call him?" he groped for the word, and then made the expressive pantomime of the opium pipe.

"Jerusha's Cats! Opium smugglers, eh? And of course the Datu wouldn't allow it—an' then ye got into a fight. I see it all, lad!" cried the Cap'n sympathetically. "Well—and how did *you* get *here*, then, Migi?"

"My father, him send me go-find great white chief." (Migi meant the Dutch Resident at Banjermassin.) "Paddle down, down, down river. Out to sea. Then proa come. Kidnap Dyak boy for crew. Proa going to Aru, but me jump ship at Ke' and hide in jungle. Me dying to go home!" he wailed, tears coming into his eyes.

"So are we, lad! So are we!" chuckled the Cap'n. "But how, Migi boy, how? That's the p'int, ye see!"

George broke into the conversation, his blue eyes

flashing. "Let's help him, anyhow, dad!" he exclaimed impetuously. "It's rotten, the way this crew of opium smugglers have acted! Think of the meanness of it—for white men! Trying to debauch a whole village of natives for a few miserable dollars' worth of opium—and then making war on them because the native Datu wouldn't let them break their own white man's laws! It makes me almost ashamed of being a white man myself! I say we go back to Kar, give Oku his price for that little proa, and then you and I and Migi can sail her to Pearl Atoll, get our pearls and go on to Borneo. That boat's still there, I'll bet. We can notify the Dutch authorities, and perhaps get a chance to buy the boat after she is condemned and these people are jailed. Le's go!"

The Cap'n puffed awhile in silence. "A ship of my own again!" he exclaimed at last. "She's forfeit to the Dyak Datu of that district, if I know sea law. Her people have proved themselves worse than pirates and plunderers. I know these Dyak chiefs. Their warriors are outlying in the jungle around her now, picking off the crew, one by one. Remember the *Tamil* case, where a schooner full of roughnecks tried the same thing with a Dyak village in 1901? She lies, now, a hulk up the Banjora. One by one, the poisoned darts of the sumpitans picked them off, to the last man. Datu Gani told me all about it."

"Let's try it, dad. It's worth it. Give Oku *ten* of

our pieces of eight, if he wants them! We'll stop at Pearl Atoll and get our pearls, and then you can buy that boat from the Datu and we'll have a craft of our own again!" he urged.

"And coal for her?" queried the Cap'n skeptically. "There's not a scrap of it left aboard her by now, I'll warrant!"

"We'll find some, up in the hills, with friendly Dyaks to help us. Dutch Borneo's full of coal," argued the boy.

"Gosh-all-fishhooks, it takes a boy to ride roughshod over obstacles!" laughed the Cap'n at George's enthusiasm. "I've got a big mind to try it, though, at that! Anything—better than waitin' here six months for the July proas!"

With Migi fattened up and restored to his former merry self, they soon abandoned the palm hut camp and made the march back to Kar.

"Polish up ten of those Guinea pieces, son," ordered the Cap'n as they broke their last camp, just outside of Kar. "I'm going to dazzle old Oku. He may have come up in his price, you know."

But the grizzled Ke' boat-builder was still willing to sell, and the small thirty-foot proa still lay under the building sheds. A dicker was made, whereby she changed hands, and the next day they spent taking on water and stores.

"Good-by, Ke'!" yelled George through cupped

hands, as she stood out of the anchorage at sundown, her one mat sail drawing rap full against the west monsoon. "Now for Pearl Atoll, dad!"

She tacked fairly well, and that night they made a long reach half-way to the New Guinea coast. At sunrise she was put about, with George and Migi hauling on tack and sheet, and by evening they had raised Teor.

"Here's where we came to grief last time, son!" grunted the Cap'n, shifting the helm. "Ease off on that sheet. Pearl Atoll bears directly south of us, now."

The fast little proa buried her outrigger deep as she bore down on the lonely atoll, its palms waving in the steady monsoon. It was sunset when they rounded the inlet and stood into the calm lagoon. Not a sign of life on shore greeted them.

"Those two natives we left behind got off on some passing canoe, I reckon," remarked the Cap'n, calling George aft for a conference. "Looky here, son, I'd trust a Dyak ahead of all the niggers, you know, but we can't be too careful about them pearls, lad. We'll pretend we're jest going in for a swim."

They anchored, and the Sloans stripped and plunged overboard, keeping a wary eye open for sharks. In a few moments they were ashore and standing over the charcoal remnants of their old brazier fire. A few bits of burned shellfish and some empty cocoanuts

were all that were left to remind them of the Javanese sailor and the Bugis cook who had stayed on the island when they were wrecked here. Eager to recover their pearls again, George swarmed up the cocoa palm that the Cap'n pointed out. To his intense relief he found the wallet still there, securely tied among the broad, thick stems of the leaves.

"Hooray—I've got 'em!" he whooped down, pocketing the wallet.

"*Shhh!*" whispered the Cap'n angrily. "Come on down an' le's see 'em."

George climbed down and handed over the wallet. The Cap'n undid its strings—and gave a low whistle of consternation. The contents were—pebbles!

George gasped with disappointment as the Cap'n dumped the handful of worthless stones out into his palm. "Beats me!" muttered the old man, scratching his head. "What in the nation could have led those fellows to go up that tree? I made sure there were no ripe cocoanuts on it, that night, before I came down."

"But you didn't!" cried George, pointing upward. A small cluster of nuts hung below the stems, almost concealed by the foliage. The tree had ripened them while they were gone!

"Don't it beat all!" groaned the Cap'n. "You can't beat Nature down in these parts, by gurry! She's allus doin' somethin' to upset the best plans ye make! Which way d'ye suppose they went with our pearls,

son? Matabello Islands, most likely. We're goin' to need that steamboat, now! I'll chase that Javanese all over the Archipelago, but I'll git him or the pearls, if we have to stay five years to do it!"

"Suppose we tell Migi all about it?" suggested George. "Set a native to catch a native, you know. He'll do anything for us, now."

"Mought," agreed the Cap'n lifelessly. "Well, what do we do now? Go on to Borneo, or try to get track of that Javanese at Matabello?"

"Matabello first. He'll make straight for Amboina's my guess."

"I doubt if he'll go near Amboina. They'd ask him too many questions before they'd ever buy his pearls. We'll touch at Matabello to-morrow."

Dejectedly they swam out to the proa, where George told the whole story of the lost pearls to Migi. The Dyak's warm brown eyes were full of sympathy as he listened. He was divided between his yearning to return to his own people and his loyalty to the Sloans who had befriended him, but the latter sentiment easily won.

"Me go! Me catch'm Java-boy!" he assured them. "Me drop off proa at Matabello. Swim ashore. You go-long. Ask plenty question. All tell heap lies. Me find out!"

The subtle native cunning of the true Islander shone in the Dyak lad's eyes as he explained his plan. If

any one could find out the truth about those pearls it would be Migi. But, in spite of the wave of confidence that their new native ally inspired, George could not sleep that night. Action, action, action! He longed for daylight, to be under way and doing, to end this gnawing suspense. Their whole fortune had been lost by the simplest natural circumstance in the world, the ripening of a bunch of cocoanuts. That a palm would mature a few green nuts in the short time they were away had not been foreseen by either of them. The place *looked* the safest and most unguessable hiding place in the world, but mere animal hunger had led a stupid Javanese sailor up the one tree in the world where their treasure had been hid. Well, no use repining over what was done and beyond recall! As the Cap'n, sleeping soundly, no doubt had philosophized.

Next day the proa ran over in a broad reach to the Matabello Islands. They are formed by gradual sea bottom subsidence, causing submerged coral barrier reefs instead of the atoll formation of building coral, and they are part of what was once a long peninsula extending out from Ceram. The inhabitants are low caste mixed Papuan and Malay races, living in a very humble way, fishing and making an occasional cargo of copra to attract the passing trader.

Migi slipped out on the outrigger while they were maneuvering off the barrier reef for an opening. He

pointed to a far-off cape to the east. "Me there, come dark," he told them as he went overboard on the off-shore side.

They watched him anxiously, fearing sharks, until his head gradually was lost to view among the waving branches of seaweed that dotted the submerged barrier reef. Then they found a gap in it for the proa and stood in toward the sand beaches of the mainland. A cluster of huts under the usual beach palms attracted them as the proa neared shore. A few apathetic natives came down to greet them. Stupid and incurious, they accepted the Cap'n's greetings and tobacco stolidly, but to all questions as to two strangers having come that way recently they proved either evasive or else emphatic with downright denials—too emphatic, it seemed to George, who was listening and using his eyes avidly. After a day among them the Cap'n gave it up. They had brought nothing to trade, so in a short time the natives had become sullen and uncommunicative.

"Sins of Nebuchadnezzar!" snorted the Cap'n exasperatedly, as they boarded the proa again. "This passel of niggers is the stupidest yet, son! Ain't none of them got the brains they was born with! Le's hope Migi's had better luck than we hev!"

They set sail, and as darkness fell reached the distant cape. Migi was waiting for them. He came out hand over hand, in the fast native crawl stroke.

"Me find'm!" he grinned. "Old woman, he talk, plenty too-much! Chief, him give Java man canoe. Gone to New Guinea."

"New Guinea!" echoed George and the Cap'n in a breath. There was a moment of astonished, reflective silence.

"Le's see, son," mused the Cap'n, as he began to get his bearings on this astounding fact. "*Of course* he went there, come to think of it! It's only fifty-odd miles from here, and that Javanese knew mighty well not to go to Amboina with all them pearls. They'd ask him too many questions as to how he came by 'em. And I know jest where he's gone, too!" he declared, with sudden conviction.

"Where, dad?" asked George, who had been listening without enthusiasm. "It looks, now, more than ever hopeless to me! I s'pose he'll keep on, clear down to Port Moresby."

"Not in a canoe, lad! Not along that squally coast, with cannibal lakatois sailin' the seas!" chortled the Cap'n happily. "Nope. He's made for that lagoon up at the head of Evans Bay. There's an old Outanata chief there who *don't* ask any questions. That old rascal's one-quarter pirate and the other three-quarters of him's jest plain thief and murderer—an' you can lay to that, my lad! There ain't been a shady transaction in all the Pearl Fisheries these last ten years that that old deevil hasn't had a finger in."

"Fat chance to get 'em back from him, then, dad!" sniffed George bitterly.

"Not in this proa," agreed Captain Sloan. "We'd all be murdered and eaten, the first of his lakatois that boarded us. We need Migi's fire-boat to do that trick. We'll go get her! Ready about, lads; Borneo for ours!"

They jumped to the sheets and the proa was headed south-southwest for the volcanic island of Nilu. Sunrise of next day raised its active column of smoke out of the sea and they went about and stood on the star-board tack nearly up to Ceram. Another long reach brought them down toward Timor, passing the lurid glare of the Api volcano by night. Followed two days of tacking through the deep waters of the Floris Sea, with islets sighted on every hand. It was anxious navigating, in so small a ship, but the monsoon held steady, broken only by an occasional thunder squall. Then the long tack from Floris to Borneo took two days more, and on the evening of the third they had reached the mouth of the Samanjang River. Its bar was piled high with great dead trees. The Cap'n had to display some pretty seamanship to work through at all, but Migi's eyes sang with happiness. Here was *home* to him! One more day, up through the lowlands of the interior, with the river banks bordered with the feathery fronds of the nipa palm, and then would begin

the great jungles in which the Dyak boy had lived all his life, except for his exile on Ke'.

As the river led them into the high jungle, George watched the great forest closing all about them with the keenest interest. Never had he seen such wonderful arches of foliage, towering far overhead, festooned with hanging vines, hazy with the sunlit mists of rank vegetation. Mighty tapang trees, a hundred and fifty feet high, with smooth buttress wing roots supporting their lower trunks, rose up along the banks. Other tall trees grew on stilts, with their roots reaching down to the soil in tripods far higher than a man's head. Everywhere was green, with the flash of sunlight on shining leaves and the call of birds and insects filling the drowsy depths of the forest.

Their proa's progress had slowed down to a mere creep against the strong current, when a long, low canoe shot around a bend upstream. Two muscular paddlers in her, with flat straw hats a yard in diameter, swung her around as she headed downstream toward them.

"My people!" yelled Migi, beside himself with excitement, while happy tears filled his eyes. He sprang up in the bows of the proa and yelled at them in Iwan Dyak.

The foremost paddler put down a long blowgun in his hands and waved his paddle. In long sweeps she shot down towards them, bows on. George noted

curiously that she was built of half the straight trunk of a huge tree, with a crocodile head carved on its prow.

"Kubing! Kubing!" screamed Migi, dancing about and waving his arms in unrestrained joy.

The forward Dyak boated his paddle with astonishment. "Migi!" he yelled. Down she swooped, in a riot of calls, question and answer. The stern man laid the canoe alongside and they leaped aboard and dashed for Migi. They rubbed noses with him, they pummeled him, all three danced about the deck with the fervor of reunion. George secured the canoe, while the Cap'n held his course, smiling on them benignly.

Kubing and the other Dyak at length turned, to look sternly at the Sloans over their shoulder, and the older man laid hand on the hilt of his parang. Muttered questionings flew between them.

"But these are *good* white men!" laughed Migi in Malay, so the Sloans could understand.

"There *are* no good white men! Devils, all!" retorted the deep voice of the elder Dyak, whose tiger-tooth ear ornaments proclaimed him a sub-chief.

"How about Rajah Brooke, the best white man the Dyak ever knew?" smiled the Cap'n at him.

The man's stern face lit up. "Are—are *you*—Rajah Brooke?" he asked in Malay, delightedly.

"No, not me; he's English. Cousins of ours, they be," replied the Cap'n. Migi interrupted, to tell them

all about himself, and a long colloquy in Iwan went on. At length he turned to the Sloans.

"My father, Tama Bulieng, the Datu, him build'm new Long House, up river. Bad white men still here. Only few left. Our warriors kill plenty," he said, proudly. "You go-long us, in canoe. Tie up proa here. My white father very welcome to the Dyaks," he grinned, beaming on the Cap'n.

They moored the proa to a great root and got into the canoe. Further upstream they met a large roofed canoe which turned out to belong to Datu Bulieng himself, and there was a still more affecting reunion as Migi sprang to his aged arms. He was a tall, stern Dyak, grim of feature, and wore the high plumes of the rhinoceros hornbill in token of his rank, while a cotton jacket with rows of silver buttons covered his muscular but elderly body. He greeted Cap'n Sloan cordially, after Migi had told about their friendship, and invited George and he to share the shade of his palm-roofed boat.

Half an hour's paddling through the tall, sunlit arches of the jungle brought them to a landing where dozens of log canoes were hauled up. Above it stretched across the river the mighty trunk of a tapang tree spanning it from bank to bank.

"Him block fire-boat, so no can come down," explained Migi, as the Sloans looked at it curiously.

The chief led the way ashore, and they went along

a trail deep into the jungle to where Long House loomed up through palm and banana foliage. Ascending notched logs, they found themselves on a veritable street laid on heavy beams, with a flooring of hewn logs far above the jungle floor. A huge palm-thatched roof loomed overhead, with open doorways leading to the various family rooms of the community lining one side of the street. Pretty Dyak girls, wearing corselets of brass rings and richly embroidered sarongs, giggled at them shyly as they went by, and naked children peered at them from the room doors. The men were all away, either working in the rice fields or outlying around the smugglers' boat.

Datu Bulieng led the way to the head house, with its rafters hung with dried human skulls in rows, the village's trophy hall from former wars. Here visitors and the unmarried men slept. The Datu sent out an order for council and presently the Dyak men came trooping in. Dressed much as Migi was, their splendid physiques shone brown and naked, except for the *chawat* or loin cloth, their necklaces of woven fiber adorned with silver buttons, their leg and arm circlets, and the delicate, lacy tattooing that each man wore on arms and shoulders. Migi as interpreter was in his element. Before them all he told of his capture by the Bugis prau, his exile on Ke' and how the white men had befriended him and brought him safely home. The Sloans could see more and more friendly glances

thrown their way as the excited Dyak boy told of his adventures, and when he ended a mighty shout of approval went up. Never before had human beings looked on them with such beaming good-will, it seemed to George and the Cap'n, as among these "savage" folk.

A long palaver in mixed Malay and Dyak ensued. The Datu offered them the fire-boat free if they would help him end the smugglers once for all in a pitched battle, but the Cap'n finally convinced him that it was their duty to arrest them, as they would probably surrender to a white man, and take them down river to the Dutch Resident. So, on the next day all the fighting men of the tribe went up river. These were war canoes, this time, great catamarans with high bamboo fighting superstructures that held twenty warriors each, armed with sumpitans, parangs and a few Singapore muskets that had found their way even into this remote interior.

By noon the smugglers' boat came in sight. She lay anchored up river, small and dilapidated, her paint all gone, her bright work green with rust. A one-pounder mounted in her waist, probably a condemned naval weapon with worn-out rifling, showed itself swathed in ragged canvas.

A stentorian hail from the Cap'n brought a few tattered, bearded men, armed with rifles, to her rails.

"Ship ahoy! Any of ye speak English aboard

there?" shouted the Cap'n as the catamaran hove to.

There was a wild commotion among the dirty ragamuffins on her decks.

"Blymme! A white man, at last!" yelled one of them whose weatherbeaten blue jacket showed him her master. "Lawd! Lawd! Lawd!" he whooped.

"Stop Lording an' listen to me!" snapped the Cap'n testily. "You people may be white, but you're no better than durned pirates, an' ye can lay to that, me lads!" called out the Cap'n sturdily. "Hanging is too good for ye, after what I hear ye done to this Dyak village. The Datu, here, has come up river to finish ye all off, right now! Hev ye anything to say for y'reselves?"

The smuggler captain held up his hand. "One moment, my friend. You are a white man, eh? And you'll stand by and see us all murdered?" he whined.

"Nope," yelled the Cap'n. "It's jest *because* ye're white that I'm givin' ye this chance. Will you surrender to me, if I give ye safe passage down to the sea, where we can turn you over to the Dutch Resident, to be dealt with according to law?"

There was a rapid fire of excited talk among the survivors on the boat. It grew to a close conference, as their voices dropped, while the Sloans and Datu Bulieng waited grimly.

Finally the master came to the rail. "We agree to it!" he called out. "At sunset to-day we turn over

this boat to the Dyaks, in your presence as a white witness. That ought to help us with the Judge, eh, Captain?" he whined in a strong Cockney accent. "And we go down in our own ship's boat, too," he demanded, cheekily.

The Cap'n turned to Datu Bulieng for conference. The old fellow shrugged his shoulders. What he wanted was a free-for-all fight, right now! But he gave way to the Cap'n at last.

"All right, but you'll go down, guarded all the way by Dyak war canoes, my man—and no monkey business, either!" he warned. "Put aboard what stores you need. Your rifles and ammunition you leave behind. That is the best I can do for you, my man," concluded the Cap'n, ending the conference.

George grasped his father's arm as their catamaran swung about to paddle a short distance downstream. "Dad—I don't like this at all," he objected warily. "Those fellows are still full of fight. *Why* should they want until sunset to get ready——"

"Tut, tut, son! Think of that long voyage along the coast! They've got stores to load, the boat to overhaul and mebbe repair small leaks, sails and gear to bend—don't worry, lad!" he reassured him, turning away to talk to the Datu about the trip down to Banjermassin.

But George was unconvinced and suspicious. These very men had turned pirates and plunderers when

released from all law and restraint up here in the jungle. They were of that evil type which never *can* be trusted. Suppose they were, right now, preparing some trick, hoping to escape in their ship's boat in the confusion? He begged the unsuspecting Captain to let him and Migi at least try to board her and watch what was going on, unseen themselves, and at last obtained a reluctant permission.

He sought out Migi and the two boys cudgeled their brains for some plan to board her. How to do it in broad daylight was something of a poser, but a clump of water hyacinth floating by gave George an idea, and Migi agreed with him that it might be feasible. Undressing, they slipped over the catamaran's side, downstream and out of sight of the little steamer. Their only present danger was from the crocodiles that infested the Samanjang, but they got around a bend and swam ashore without encountering one. Once in the jungle they circled until they reached a point above the steamer where Migi knew of a hyacinth swamp. Then they spent the afternoon in fashioning two head nets of the bulbous plants, in which they could float downstream with their faces concealed in the thick foliage. The muddy water could be depended upon to conceal their bodies, if careful to tread water upright on approaching the steamer.

An hour before sunset they were ready, and swam out in midstream. Diving under their tangled head

nets, they floated down silently, guiding themselves with an occasional arm stroke. The little steamer seemed deserted as they bore down on her and gripped her rusty anchor chain. George loosened the flap of his automatic and climbed up the chain, with Migi following, armed only with the kriss in his belt. Peering cautiously over the bows, they saw the empty forecastle deck lying before them. A ragged jib hung in tatters from its lifts. George and Migi concealed themselves under its folds and watched.

One bearded ruffian was standing on watch beside the engine-room hatch. The rest were all below, and a mutter of voices and the steady chink of hammer strokes came from the engine room! George stiffened with anger. What *could* they be doing to the engine! They weren't keeping faith with Datu Bulieng and the Captain at all events.

Then a hail from below to bear a hand called the guard down the ladder. Seizing their chance, George and Migi raced across the deck and slipped into the forecastle. It was empty. They shut the door and locked it inside.

"Well, we're here—and something's up!" laughed George nervously at Migi. "If we call the Captain, it means a fight. S'pose we can go it alone?"

Migi grinned and held up five fingers, shaking his head.

"Five men against two boys—fat chance!" groaned

George, feeling that this time he had taken on a good deal too large a contract. Then a coat, hanging on a hook, gave him a ray of hope. Its owner would come for it, sooner or later, and they could nab him. Then another would come for *him*! "A mouse trap, Migi; gorry, what an idea!" whispered George, pointing to the coat. "Let's find some rope."

There was none in the fore-castle, but some old life preservers under the bunks gave them plenty of straps. Migi then opened the door and the boys hid behind it, George hoping that his luck would hold and they would not *all* come together! Cautiously he unlocked the door waiting for the first victim.

The noise of hammer and cold chisel kept up in the engine room, and they could hear two men on the deck loading the boat with stores. Then a sudden thought struck George, freezing the blood in his veins with an icy chill. There was ammunition aboard for the one-pounder, plenty of it, most likely. Suppose they were mining the ship with it! Where was it kept? How would it be arranged to touch off? The idea sent him into a frenzy, yet there was no way to explore out of the fore-castle. The ammunition would be kept aft, if anywhere. That—would have to wait!

After a long time, heavy footsteps approached the fore-castle door, and the boys stiffened for action. The owner of the coat was coming for it! The minute he stepped inside both boys pounced on him. He was a

powerful man but no match for Migi's native strength and agility. A brief, silent struggle ended in the man lying bound and gagged before them on the floor.

"One!" crowed George, dancing about the empty forecastle with Migi. "The Mouse Trap's working fine! Next!"

They had not long to wait, for the smugglers were now embarking. There were callings and runnings to and fro and shouted orders. Presently footsteps came running for the forecastle.

"Now then, Bill—lively does it!" called the master's voice authoritatively. He stepped inside.

"Gow-*ding* it!" he gasped, choking into silence as Migi's fingers closed around his throat. They bore him to the floor, and, when he ceased to struggle, tied him securely.

"Two!" whispered George, in suppressed giggles—"Hist!"

"Ready-o, Cap! I say in there!" called a hurried voice outside. Then it stopped, suspiciously, as no answer came. "What the ——!" he ejaculated, but he stopped right there, for George confronted him with leveled automatic. "Don't move—and don't yell!" gritted the boy quietly as his man went limp, thunder-struck. Migi slipped around him and yanked his hands down behind his back. Then they shoved him into the forecastle and tied him up.

"Now for the last two, Migi!" said George, running

out on deck. They found them already in the boat, waiting for their comrades. Leaving Migi to guard them with the automatic, George hurried to the after cabin, fearing the worst, but determined to risk all rather than be too late.

He stopped before a fine, almost invisible wire that stretched across the cabin door!

"So that's their game, eh?" he whistled, softly. "We were to come aboard, and blow her up ourselves, with that thing!" He eyed it gingerly, and then stooped under the wire, most carefully, and got inside the cabin. A faint light showed through a locker panel, into which the wire led. He opened the door little by little—and an ingenious infernal machine met his eyes. It was just a lighted candle, burning placidly, but back of it was an open one-pounder shell, while the candle was set on a case of them, the brass sides of the uppermost already filed through and the powder showing! A man entering the cabin door carelessly would pull the wire and tip over the open shell on the candle and set the whole case off!

George blew out the candle and worked his way out, leaving everything just as it was. It sickened him to know that men of his own race *could* be so vile, that when men once descended to piracy and lawlessness *this* would be the inevitable result—callousness to human life, treachery to the chance friend, and all the

malignant devils of revenge, hatred and envy reigning over their souls.

He went out on deck, feeling somehow older and sadder. He had looked into the Pit, and he loathed the memory of it.

"Catamaran ahoy!" he called out from the stern rail. "Oh, father! Come aboard—she's ready to turn over to the Dutch Government."

CHAPTER V

THE MIDGET STEAMER

"Hi, George—d'ye want to go home?" called Captain John Sloan, quizzically, his eyes twinkling as he came up the log ladder to the high street of Long House. Datu Bulieng, the Dyak chief, and his party followed him, and news was written all over their faces.

George had been sitting on a rattan bunk in the head house of the Datu's Dyak community. Migi was with him, the two youths chatting light-heartedly. As he rose to greet his father, his eye roved down the cool, shady length of the long aërial street under its huge roof of palm thatch. Overhead, rows of great beams crossed horizontally. To his right the split plank walls of the family rooms partitioned the immense building, with their open doorways, and their ax-hewn rice mortars standing like V-shaped troughs in long rows along the wall. On the floor in front of him lay a palm mat, with a pile of unwinnowed rice, which a pretty Dyak girl had just left to go fetch her scoop-shaped winnowing basket. Outside towered

the great, green, sunlit jungle, noisy with birds, flashing with metallic blue and green butterflies, alive with the pulsing, vivid splendor of the tropics.

"I—don't—know, father," replied the boy, stretching lazily. "They say the East gets you, sooner or later. This jungle's got me, I'll say! I never saw such trees anywhere! One of them I measured the other day had a trunk forty feet across its wing roots. Migi looked like a pygmy standing in the flat curve of one of them. But—did you get the ship, dad?" he broke off to inquire, eagerly.

"We did!" retorted the Cap'n, emphatically. "Land's Cats, we did, son! This Assistant Resident's a young feller, Lieutenant Hobbema, aged twenty-two. Good sort! He jailed that crew, took over the steamer, and sold her to me in one, two, three order. You and Migi have got to go down to Court to testify, in a couple of months—whenever the judge gets around to this district. Meanwhile we'll run over to New Guinea after our pesky pearls, son. I've got coal. We'll hev to drift her down the Samanjang to meet a junk of it that I chartered from a Chinese."

The Cap'n sat down, breathing thickly after this long speech, and mopping the perspiration from his ruddy brow. Although there was a breeze stirring, it was hot, even under the shade of the great roof of Long House. Migi and the Dyaks were crowding around Datu Bulieng, plying him with questions about the

great world outside, so George and his father were left to themselves for awhile.

"Seems to me that boat will be home to us for some time yet, father," said George. "She's home enough for me! I know every foot of her now, and she's a little dandy!" exclaimed the boy enthusiastically. "We'll name her the *Maunie*, after Datu Bulieng's daughter—shall we say, *Miss Bulieng*?" he laughed.

"Sure! *Maunie* 'tis, if you want it! Welp; she's ours, anyhow!" grunted the Cap'n contentedly. "I sold our pieces-of-eight, off the Guinea wreck, and have about a thousand dollars gold left, after paying for this midget steamer and buying coal and stores. We'll go aboard this afternoon, git up her anchor, and drop down to the great tree until the Datu has it cut in two."

They went up with a party of Dyaks, after the mid-day curry and rice. George had spent at least half his time on her while the Cap'n had been away. She was already home to him. About a hundred and ten feet long, she had evidently been a former English steam yacht, converted to a small trading steamer. A trunk cabin had been added forward, extending for some thirty-five feet aft, where it fell away to a long waist, coming up again for a poop cabin for her officers' quarters. On her had been mounted an old one-pounder on a naval base, aft of her long, low engine house. A single funnel and a signal mast, with a

serviceable yard for a foresail to set in favorable winds, completed her rig.

As a small, inter-island trading ship she would be perfection George thought. He had investigated the engine room. The guides and piston rods of her hundred-horse compound engine had been chipped and scored by the renegade machinists, but the boy had discovered spare ones under the engine floor, and he and Migi had put in much time replacing them. All she needed now was coal.

"Humph!" ejaculated the Cap'n, as they stepped aboard. "We'll go aground on half the bends and bars of the river without steam, son! And I'll bet her bottom's a sight! Nice little craft, though! Better'n the old *Kawani*, eh?" he chuckled.

"You bet! What's the matter with charcoal for the fires, dad? We can build a kiln and make enough to get down the river. Wonder the smugglers didn't try it themselves."

"Hi!" grinned Migi. "No can do!" He made the expressive pantomime of the sumpitan, with his cupped fist to lips. "White man keep close to him boat! Must be!"

"Hosts of Pharaoh, I'll bet 'twas as much as a man's life was wuth to forage for food at all!" sniffed the Cap'n warmly. "Welp; le's up anchor and beach her down by the big tree, anyway. A clean bottom'll help some."

Stalwart Dyak youths manned her capstan bars, and after tremendous efforts the anchor was torn from the river bottom where it had lain so long. The *Mauie*, as she was re-named, drifted downstream, guided by a long Dyak canoe with ten paddlers in it and a coir rope leading out over her stern chock.

“Boy, you mought as well git your charcoal comin’, now—but what’s the matter with us finding our own coal mine?” queried the Cap’n cannily. “I’ll bet these hills are full of coal. Tradin’ll be one gran’ sweet song, if all we got to do for more coal is to run up here and take it—eh?” he guffawed at George, hilariously. Having a ship of his own again seemed to make a new man of the Cap’n. George felt that he had never seen his father so cheerful since they had lost the *Kawani*, and his own heart sang with happiness to see the old man a brisk and forceful sea-captain once more.

It took oceans of talk and pantomime to explain to Datu Bulieng what coal *was*. Stones that would burn! Incredible! Yes, certain black stones *would* burn, they assured him. Migi got the idea, after George had done a vigorous pantomime before the boiler and shown him a few bits scraped out of the bunkers. After two days of search, Dyak runners came back to Long House bearing bags of stones. Among them they found pieces of lignite—brown coal, but they would burn!

Meanwhile great skid trees had been felled into the

river, and the *Mauie* had been hauled out on the improvised marine railway. Long fringes of river weed and untold mud were scraped off her bottom, but, as the Samanjang was fresh water up at Long House, no borers or barnacles had attacked her and she went overboard again, sound and tight.

The great tapang tree was next chopped in two and its ends floated open like a great gate. Steam was raised over the brown coal. The Cap'n gave George and Migi a thorough drilling on how to run a marine engine and showed them how to work the water out of her and warm her up preparatory to starting. A few days later, for the first time in five months, her gong clanged in the engine room and George and Migi threw the ram over and the screw revolved astern.

"Hip! Hip!—We're off!" shouted George, popping his head up out of the engine hatch to see the banks go by. His father and two Dyak helmsmen were up on the bridge, while Datu Bulieng and the villagers waved them good-by from the landing. Then the *Mauie* dropped from view of them around a bend, and black smoke from her funnel filled the high arches of the jungle.

There was little time for George to reflect on leaving hospitable Long House and all their Dyak friends. Bells came thick and fast, as bend after bend required slowing, stopping or reversing the engine. Migi proved an apt pupil, and the two boys had a glorious

time, busy as bees, between the fires, the pumps and condensers, the reverse ram and the main throttle lever. They passed their little Ke' proa, still tied to her root, and then came the long reaches of the lower river, with waving walls of the fern-like fronds of the nipa palm, rising half-submerged from the brackish water. Great flocks of white herons gathered on ahead of the Midget Steamer, as the Cap'n called her, during her swift course down the reaches. The *Mawie* was fast; even with brown coal she was doing all of ten knots. With soft black coal she would go fourteen.

It was nightfall when they wormed through the barrier of great dead trees at the river mouth bar, battled through the surf rip of the open water, and stood out over the smooth swells of the Java Sea. A light gleamed offshore. It proved to be their coal barge, a big Chinese junk, anchored, her square sails furled, her crew of Celestials lazing away the hours of waiting for them.

"Huang Wu, ahoy!" hailed Cap'n Sloan, as the *Mawie* ran alongside and stopped her engines. As she lost way, the two Dyak deck hands forward dropped the anchor and she drifted astern to its scope, until both boats swung together head to the wind.

"Pretty flying moor! Gee, dad's some seaman!" ejaculated George, watching it from the engine hatch. "Ring off, Migi! All oil siphons out! I'll be down to bank fires directly."

A huge camel, made of a stout bamboo with a mat buffer on it, was run out from the towering walls of the junk, so that the pitching vessels were fended off yet held together by their mooring cables. Across it, as on a boat-boom, lines of coolies tripped, carrying coal baskets, stores, water breakers, tools, trading goods, everything needful that the Cap'n had bought in Banjermassin. The human bucket-chain was quick and effective.

"Hand-somely with that paint, lads!" bawled the Cap'n as tubs of lead and oil came over, slung on wooden yokes. "Paint! Jerusha's Cats, she's a holy sight! I'd never dare show myself in the Islands looking this-away! All clear there, Huang!"

The Chinese captain sent over the tally of stores. The Cap'n checked it over.

"C'rect! 'Way camel, there! Stand by the engines, George!" Clang! went the gong, and the engine responded with the quick thump of its piston rods. The new black coal came tumbling out the bunker doors; the fires roared; steam rose to a hundred and fifty pounds, as the *Mauie* forged ahead through the dark waters.

By sunrise they were off the Luari Islands, with the coast of Borneo far over the horizon. Proa sails dotted the sea; here and there a venturesome fisherman's canoe far offshore. Passing Celebes they made the Boutong Passage next day and then laid course on the

great circle past Bouru and Ceram. The evening of the fourth day saw them raising the high, mountainous coasts of Dutch New Guinea, with an occasional glimpse of the snow mountains of the interior inland through the rifts in the cloud banks.

The Midget Steamer was now all in gleaming white, for the Dyaks had been busy painting over her sides. A coat of war gray would have passed her for some small gunboat of our own flag, down from Mindanao; indeed, she was spoken as such by several passing liners of the Singapore-Australia service.

But she looked tiny enough as she stood in under the towering ramparts of the New Guinea mountains. Off the Capes she pitched and rolled in the stormy chop sea that came up from the inexhaustible south, out of the shallow waters of the pearl fisheries. The mountains at this part of the coast come close down to the sea, enclosing in their rock-ribbed arms a deep bay, with a long lagoon extending up inland from the head of it.

George and Migi eyed it curiously. It was the first time either of them had been to Cannibal Land. A stern, rough, savage coast, inhospitable alike to man and vessel. The smoke of native signal fires rose from the Capes on either hand as she turned into the roadstead from the open sea. Two miles further up the bay, a *lakatoi* or native war catamaran was discovered, tacking across the lagoon under her single huge lateen, her superstructure crowded with mop-haired blacks,

their bows and spears jutting up out of the mass of dark bodies like a miniature forest. At sight of the *Mauie* standing in, they hastily veered out sheet and made all sail up the lagoon.

"Gee, they love us, don't they!" grinned George at Migi, after peering below to see if the engine was doing well.

The Dyak boy touched his arm and pointed toward the belt of mangroves that lined the shores: "Black-boy, him watch," he said.

George scanned the green shores in vain. "As Assistant Scrutineer of this engine, you're some looker, Migi! Danged if *I* see anything or anybody!"

"Look-see!" insisted Migi, pointing again. George sighted along his finger.

"Now, I see 'em! Gee-roo! Swinging along through the trees back of those mangroves like a troop of monkeys! So this is Paris, eh? Cannibals, all of them—fine people!" he grinned.

Migi nodded. "Him *kai-kai* (eat) white boy, plenty, too-much!" he declared vigorously.

"Thank you, too much—I'd rather not!" snickered George. "But say, Migi, you and I gotta go ashore here, if we're ever going to find those pearls! I suppose father'll run up to the village for a pow-wow. He'll have to be mighty cute, to get anything out of that old Outanata chief. Le's you and I pull that

Matabello Island stunt of yours again, and do a scout ashore of our own, on the side?"

Migi's eyes sparkled. A bushwhacking adventure of this sort just suited him!

"Mind the engine, fellah—I'll go ask the Cap'n about it," said George, leaving to go forward on the bridge.

He outlined his plan. The Cap'n listened, and shot in questions at intervals, while the Midget Steamer plowed further and further up the lagoon, which had now narrowed to less than a mile in width.

"I dunno, son," rumbled the Cap'n, noncommittally, when George had said all he could for his plan. "We'll need every man on board, if it comes to a fight. These people are bad, and I'm depending on you to man the one-pounder, while I maneuver the ship. We gotta have one Dyak steersman at the wheel and t'other to protect him with his shield and parang. That leaves Migi at the engine, and the two deck hands to pass ammunition or bear a hand with their blowguns. I expect to begin throwing dynamite sticks, if it gets *too* warm! It's a wild country, son, and I hate to let you two boys ashore in it. I want the one-pounder loaded right now."

George left the bridge and set about getting up the ammunition. He slipped the canvas cover off the gun, stowed a case of the shells under the one-pounder and put a shell into her breech. While he was at it,

the gong rang and Migi stopped the engine. The *Maui* sheered to starboard. Cap'n Sloan stumped over to the port bridge as she lost headway and slowed down to a drift.

George ran over to the port rail. The lakatoi had come back again down the lagoon, the incurved corners of her mat sail sticking up like a fan. She rose out of the sea like a castle, and the rows of long oval shields carried by the warriors on her fighting deck looked like oblong white eggs stood on end. Her people were yelling derision and defiance at them, brandishing their bows and spears, evidently bent on boarding them summarily.

"Of *all* the nerve!" exploded the Cap'n testily. "Fire a shot across her bows, son! We can't let these niggers come within bowshot of us."

George put his shoulder to the one-pounder, swung her muzzle across the lakatoi's bows and pulled trigger. The sharp report and cloud of white smoke was answered by the zipping ricochet of the shell as it skipped and dived across the lagoon, throwing up splashes of spray and exploding in a puff of smoke as it struck a tree in the jungle.

"Avast, there! Heave to!" yelled the Cap'n. "Hosts of Pharaoh,—why, it's Yow-uta himself. Yow, ahoy, there!" he called out as George slipped in another shell.

There was a chattering commotion aboard her. The

natives had never heard a cannon before, evidently. She let out sheet and hung in the wind. A tall black, with a brimless straw hat atop his frizzled mop of hair, stood up on her shroud windlass and held up his left hand.

"Hai! White man!—Goddy-goddy! You Cap'n Sloa'?" he called out amazedly, recognizing the Cap'n finally as the two ships drifted nearer. "How dam' pearl fishin'?" he asked, conciliatorily, by way of passing the time of day.

"Hello, Yow-uta! What you mean by bearin' down on us like a bag o' hammers, eh?" chided Cap'n Sloan. "Had to make a leetle gun-talk, we did! Got any pearls to sell, Chief—an' no questions asked?" he inquired bluffly.

Chief Yow-uta grinned, his evil visage screwed up in a crafty smile. "Yea. Me got'm prenty pearl-shell," he answered in the universal pidgin-English.

"Don't want it!" replied the Cap'n shortly. "How about the leetle round boys, eh? You got 'em—don't tell *me*!"

The Chief grinned oilily. "P'rhaps," he admitted slyly.

"Awright. I'll anchor up here a piece. You bring 'em aboard, Chief, an' we'll do a bit of business, eh? I'll be here three days."

"Going, sar!" wailed the Chief, in the singsong

tones imitated from Chinese traders. "Will come soon."

He put the lakatoi about and stood off up the lagoon toward his village.

"Now, son—we *got* 'em!" declared the Cap'n. "That old bird'll come aboard and try to *sell us our own pearls*, by heck! He has no idea where the Javanese got 'em. Now, the thing for you to do is to get ashore and cut out that Javanese, if he's still here. Bring him out, alive and hearty, and when the right time comes, we'll produce him as witness, and jest annex our pearls. We'll heave the chief overboard if he makes any fuss about it—hey? Some scheme, son," he chortled.

"Has its good points," admitted George. "How about the Javanese telling him just what you look like, and then he's wise to the whole idea?"

"That's jest what we got to prevent! If he's still there, you can git him. The chances are, the old deevil took the pearls away from him and then either ate the poor sailorman or has got him cooped up somewhere to fatten him up. With this light breeze, you can beat the lakatoi to the village, goin' through the jungle. But, mind you take care of yourself! It's a much more dangerous piece of business than anything you've tried yet."

George was off like a shot, with the desired permission, before the Cap'n could change his mind. Migi

belted on his quiver of poisoned sumpitan darts, grasped his long blowgun, and was ready. Slipping over the side, they swam ashore and were soon through the belt of mangroves and into the jungle. It was rank and dense and full of thorns, but the tree growth was nowhere near as immense as in the moist jungles of Borneo, up under the equator. They soon struck a trail that paralleled the shores, and so made good time. No outlying scouts were encountered, as most of the warriors were up at the village, news of the white boat having brought them in, probably for an attack in force.

After a time the sound of children's voices and the grunts of pigs in the jungle told them they were nearing the village. They left the trail and sank deep into the undergrowth. Watching from a vantage point in the thick tree-ferns, they saw that it was a collection of low attap huts, built on short piles, the bamboo rafters curved over a central ridge pole. Pigs, fowl, dogs, tame kangaroos and goats wandered at will about the sandy grounds, while naked black women in palm fiber aprons went about their household tasks. Down by the landing the men were gathered, chattering in a Papuan dialect around the long black canoes hauled up on shore. The lakatoi still lay some distance down the lagoon, almost becalmed under the hot tropical sun.

They circled the village through the jungle. The

Javanese was nowhere in sight, neither among the men around the canoes nor anywhere in the village.

"That's bad!" whispered George to Migi. "Either he's gone, or they've eaten him, or he's a prisoner in some hut. We'll have to get into the village, somehow."

"Keep him in strong house. Must be," declared the Dyak boy.

"Sure! *There's* a sort of stockaded hut, yonder, built of strong palings. See it? Right back of that great hut, which is the chief's, I suppose."

How to get into the village in broad daylight, undetected, was something of a problem. It solved itself, however, presently, for a yelling and excitement among the warriors down at the landing over the arrival of the lakatoi brought every woman, child and dog running pell-mell down to the canoes.

"Now's our chance, Migi—we gotta make it quick and snappy!"

They dashed for the paling of the stockaded hut and peered into the gloom inside. There sat the Javanese sailor, chained securely to a post with a shackle around his ankle! He could not come near the wall, but was otherwise free to move about. He was fat as butter, George noted.

"Men coming—run!" whispered Migi in his ear.

They backed away hastily, keeping the hut between them and the landing, and so regained the jungle.

"Now we *are* all balled up!" exclaimed George bitterly. "Old Yow-uta's sure to come and question the Javanese, and then he knows father's whole scheme. If we'd only gotten him away, the old boy would have hustled out to sell us our pearls before the Javanese could get out to tell his side of the story. Gosh, if I know *what* to do!"

"Wait," advised Migi. "Mebbe we see where dem pearls *at*."

That *would* be the key of the situation! If they could get hold of them, the Javanese and the chief did not matter. As they watched, the noise down at the landing ceased, and deep-chested orders from Yow-uta formed the men into some sort of war party. Without further delay they started off in single file, marching up past the village huts, and their leaders entered the jungle by the same trail that the boys had just come along. George shook with excitement as he watched them breathlessly, his heart-beats sounding in his open mouth. Evidently an attack was being planned on the Midget Steamer herself! A surprise attack, at night, of course! George could picture them, swimming silently out in the dead of night, creeping aboard, and then suddenly storming fore-castle and after quarters simultaneously. Of what avail would their cannon and rifles be then?

These natives were different and more ferocious savages than any he had yet seen. The Papuans of

British New Guinea are more or less semi-civilized, efficiently policed. But these, of totally unexplored Dutch territory, were as wild and cannibalistic as ever were their forebears before the first white ship sailed along their coasts. Each warrior was hideously streaked with white clay, and wore the ivory tusks of the wild boar through his nostrils, thus giving him a particularly fierce aspect. Some of them carried long war clubs, the handle of iron-wood and the head a thick, sharpened disc of jade. Others were armed with bows and spears; and all carried long oval shields, white in color, with diabolical faces carved on them in scrolls of red cinnabar paint.

As the last of the war party disappeared into the jungle, George was more than worried. Their position was now one of extreme peril. Separated, he and Migi could now only regain the steamer by canoe, and the Cap'n was practically alone on her, for none of the Dyaks could handle the one-pounder. Only one thing was favorable: the Cap'n would not sleep until they returned. He could not be surprised that way.

Meanwhile, how to get back to their ship? George puzzled over it, thinking hard. A guard of old men and youths hung around the canoe landing. As for the pearls, they might be on Chief Yow himself. Would he leave such possessions in his hut?

Suddenly George jumped with fright as a new danger presented itself. Their own tracks! Surely

those white man's shoes of his had left a print, somewhere along their trail! The war party would come upon it, pointing toward their village, and at least a detail would be detached to track them to their present lair!

"Migi, we gotta *do* something about all this, mighty sudden pronto!" whispered George anxiously, telling him his thought of their being tracked. "Won't do for us to be found here, and get ambushed in the jungle. That was a regular kid mistake we made! Old Chief Yow's got us, both ways!"

A woman came bearing a bowl of food to the Javanese's prison at that moment, and it gave him his cue.

"Quick, Migi!—after her!"

They raced to the stockaded hut, ran around to its door and dashed inside. The old woman dropped her bowl and opened her mouth to yell, but Migi throttled her and after a brief, ineffectual struggle she lay bound on the floor of the hut. The Javanese recognized George with a grunt of surprise, and crawled to him abjectly, expecting at least to be killed for his sins at once.

But George had no time for him, just then. Spying a pile of logs against the back of the chief's hut, he ran out and dragged one in, shutting the hut door before any one noticed him. Using it as a ram, he and Migi broke the great stake that held the Javanese, and he was free except for the encumbrance of the

chain. The stake, however, would make a serviceable club, George observed, as the Javanese picked it up, mumbling his thanks.

"No *kai-kai* you-fellah this time!" grinned George at him. "Where are our pearls?"

The Javanese looked at them, astonished, eyeing Migi's kriss and George's automatic fearfully. That the pearls could have belonged to the Sloans did not seem to penetrate.

"Me find'm pearl in cocoanut tree, yes. B'long you-fellah, no?" he inquired, perplexedly.

"Of course they were ours!" retorted George heatedly. "Where are they now?—that's what I want to know! You tell the truth—see!" he gritted, laying his hand on the pistol holster.

"Chief got'm!" wailed the Javanese, with a despairing gesture. "Him take'm, prenty. Say will eat. Look!" he cried, pointing at his fat sides, lugubriously.

The boys burst out laughing. "Well," said George, "we'll get 'em back before we're through! This place will be our fort, for the present. We'll barricade the door with that log, Migi." They dug a heel for it and braced its stout end against the palings of the door. Then they fell to on the bowl of food, for both were ravenous.

The villagers had now gone about their usual occupations, the women weaving mats or making sago bread, the old men squatting in groups, chewing betel

nut and talking, and the youths lounging about the canoes. No one came near the hut; it was an old story with them, and the prisoner no longer excited any interest.

This inaction soon got on George's nerves. How soon would the trackers from the war party get back? It was also essential to regain the Midget Steamer soon, for the Outanatas might plan some way to board her in broad daylight, unless he could somehow warn the Cap'n. Then an idea occurred to him. Why not set fire to the chief's hut? If the pearls were there, the old men would dash in to get them and any other loot out, the first thing, and they themselves could make a run for the canoes in the smoke and excitement. Three men, with a fixed purpose in mind, were equal to any mob, he well knew.

"Help me open this door, Migi—and stand by!" he whispered, having formed his resolution. They got the beam away, and George watched his opportunity to squirm out, crawl across the alleyway, and hide in the pile of logs against the back of the chief's hut. As he felt for a match, the boy's heart pounded with excitement. He was starting something, with a vengeance! If all went well, it would be a triumphant finish and would perhaps recover their pearls; but, for better or worse——

"Here goes!" he muttered, as he lit the match and touched it to the thatch of dry palm attap.

The flame spread up in a broad sheet as he dashed back inside their own hut. Smoke arose in a cloud; then came the shrill alarm of a woman's screech and the excited shouts of the youths and old men. They were coming! He and Migi barricaded the door and watched through the palings. Natives crowded in the alley, beating at the flames and hurling gourds of water. In vain! The hut soon became a roaring furnace. Youths dashed out of it carrying weapons and household furniture, and then a group of old men appeared, some bearing totems and fetishes, while two of them dragged an old sea-chest, probably captured from some schooner whose crew had been murdered. George's eyes blazed with excitement as he watched them.

"Now, Migi!" he hissed, "get that chest, and we'll make for the canoes!" They threw aside the log and opened the door. Migi paused a moment to shoot a dart at one of the chest haulers, and then George dashed out through the smoke, firing his automatic as he ran. Their sudden charge threw the village into the wildest confusion. Women and children ran squealing for the jungle, while the men raced hither and yon for weapons. Straight for the chest sprinted George, he and Migi firing right and left, while the Javanese wielded his stake with telling effect. Before the bewildered savages had gathered their wits, Migi had swung the chest upon his muscular back, and,

bending low under his heavy burden, scuttled for the canoes, George and the Javanese covering his rear. They dumped the chest in the bottom of the nearest canoe and shoved off.

Out in the lagoon they spied the Midget Steamer lying at anchor about a mile below the village, her glistening gun trained right at them. George and Migi and the Javanese paddled for dear life, but they made slow headway. Three canoes put off after them from the landing, filled with yelling youths and screeching old warriors. They closed up the distance swiftly, and soon arrows whistled overhead. One stuck in the thwart a hand's breadth from George's back. It was of cane, a yard long, without feathers and with a long, toothed ebony point.

Then they saw the Cap'n race aft to the one-pounder and a shell flew screaming over their heads and exploded among the pursuing canoes. It threw up a geyser that swamped one of them, but the other two came on, and George stopped paddling to fire back with his automatic. At the same time diabolical yells burst out from the jungle alongshore, and the war party of Outanatas sprang out through the fringe of mangroves and leaped splashing out through the shallow water toward the Midget Steamer. Soon they began swimming swiftly, an attack in force on the Cap'n and his Dyaks, who were firing at them with their long sumpitans. The Cap'n, however, paid them

no attention, so eager was he to help George. The gun barked, and a second shell flew over their heads as an arrow came singing aboard. It pierced the Javanese through the shoulders and he fell forward with a deep groan. The Outanata warriors were now closing in on the steamer, their heads bobbing like cocoanuts as they treaded water to shoot their bows; but the Cap'n did not swerve his gun on them, aiming it fixedly for a shot at George's pursuers. Here was the real danger, for George and Migi were no match for the two canoes of savages that were swooping down on them. They stopped paddling and began to shoot with sum-pitan and automatic. Then the shell came whining overhead and exploded with a frightful crash full into the canoe astern to port. She blew up like a match box and her survivors were thrown headlong into the river. The other one sheered off at the hot fire that George and Migi kept up.

The danger center of the fight now shifted to the steamer. Heads swarmed around her in the water; shields lifted up like great flat clamshells; long black arms, gripping spears, shot up her sides, while the Dyaks aboard hacked busily with their parangs. Suddenly the Cap'n stooped, and George felt, with a gripping at his heart, that he was hit. But he rose, put a short white cylinder to the cigar in his teeth, and cast it among the boarding party. There was a stunning report, a vast geyser of water that rocked the

Mauie wildly, and the hurtle of black bodies driven headlong through the spray.

The Outanatas re-formed, yelling defiance, climbed aboard on all sides and a fell fight on deck ensued. The Cap'n charged, wielding a flashing cutlass—the same cutlass that had scuttled the devil-fish on Ke'—and laid about him at the head of his Dyaks, the Outanatas, who outnumbered him two to one, guarding themselves with their shields and prodding at him with their spears.

“Gee, we’ve just *got* to get into that, somehow!” gritted George. “They’ll kill father before my very eyes!” He crouched below the gunwale, jamming in a fresh clip of cartridges, his eyes measuring the distance to the gunboat, still nearly a quarter of a mile.

“I wonder how far this automatic will carry,” he muttered. He rested the weapon across the gunwale, sighting high. The canoe behind them was shooting arrows, afraid to come to close quarters. Migi was replying with his deadly sumpitan darts, their own canoe drifting idly on the still waters. It was an ideal condition for a long shot. George pulled trigger and his bullet threw up a white streak directly in front of her side. Raising the sights a trifle more, he fired again. This time no answering splash came, so, training it carefully on the knot of savages that were pressing back the Cap'n and his party along the waist, he fired a burst of shots. To his intense joy, the savages

halted their charge, looking over at his canoe bewilderedly.

"Got the range all right!" whispered the boy to himself eagerly. "Now, if I can only hold it!" He pulled trigger three times rapidly. Tumbling over one another the savages dropped back, looking over at their canoe, amazed at this unexpected diversion. Like a flash the Cap'n raced back to the gun, swung it and fired point blank into them. The horizontal red flash from its muzzle, the rolling cloud of smoke and the sharp, spanking report made a vivid scene, forever to be etched in the boy's memory. Through the drift of smoke he could see the savages leaping helter-skelter into the lagoon and making for the shore. Then the gun swung out to them once more, and a shell came ripping and whining, hungry for the remaining canoe astern. It buzzed close overhead, ricocheted, and exploded half-way back to the village landing. At sight of this mysterious danger, far in their rear, the savages in her spun her around and fled. They had had enough of these white men!

George and Migi resumed their paddles and soon bore down on the *Mauie*.

"Hosts of Jehovah!" roared the Cap'n at them jubilantly. "We jest ruined that passel of pirates! Them bullets of yourn come in mighty handy, son! They'd about hed us, I dunno! What ye got there?"

he called, perceiving the chest in the bottom of the canoe.

"Did they hurt you any, father?" called out George, anxiously.

"Nope. Nothin' but a couple of scratches and a bruise or two from them war clubs," growled the Cap'n sturdily. "But we ain't got our pearls back, son. I've got that old deevil, Yow-uta, here; dead as a mackerel, he is,—but there ain't a thing on him but a loin cloth, some hair scalps, and some white paint. Where'd ye git that chist?"

"Just an idea of mine!" laughed George. "People usually go for their valuables when there is a fire, so I started one—in the chief's house. Looks like the old fellow's strong box to me!"

"Ye don't say! Git her up here and we'll open it!" barked the Cap'n excitedly. They swung it over the rail and an ax was brought. Inside, all the loot from a dozen trading schooners came to view: sextants, chronometers, compasses, gold watches, jewelry, gold and silver pieces from a dozen nations—and, in a compartment of its own, two small bags of pearls!

"These is ourn, all right!" chortled the Cap'n, opening one of them. "As for the rest of this plunder, we'll turn it over to the Governor at Amboina. Want to go home now, son?" chuckled Captain Sloan, poking George in the ribs facetiously.

"Not with this good packet under us, dad! The

East's got me, I'll tell the world! Le's send for mother to come out here. We have everything, now,—friends, coal, and a good ship! What more could any one want?"

"Up anchor, lads!" ordered the Cap'n suddenly. "Every village on the lagoon will be after us soon. This place seems kinder unhealthy to me—now that we got back our pearls. Amboina next!"

CHAPTER VI

A BLACK LEOPARD OF SUMATRA

Cap'n John Sloan had been ashore three days in Amboina, the capital of Ceram in the Moluccas, the Spice Isles of the East. George awaited the Cap'n's return with increasing expectancy, for he knew his father was planning a big change in their lives, and his curiosity as to what that change would be grew and grew until he could think of nothing else. He knew that the Cap'n was done with pearling for good; that their old pearl schooner days on the *Karwani*, diving and tending air pumps—a prosaic, toilsome and sweltering business down on the Fisheries—were over. George and Migi, his Dyak boy chum, were idling out the hot days under the awning of the Sloan's little steamer, the *Mauie*, awaiting the Cap'n's coming while she swung at anchor, seemingly suspended in mid-air over the boundless forests of purple and orange coral beds forty feet beneath them in the crystal depths of Amboina Bay.

Migi had the art of idling developed to a science. All he cared for was hunting, with fishing, perhaps,

as an infrequent side line. Aboard ship he would play chess by the day at a time; if George tired of this, even doing tricks with a string suited him. Anything, so long as it was a game! Back in Borneo, where they had captured the *Mauie* from a renegade crew of opium smugglers, George and Migi had spent most of their time hunting in the jungle near Long House, where Datu Bulieng, Migi's father, ruled as the Datu of a small Dyak principality. George loved the tropic jungle, too; its grand columnar trees, hung with lianas that climbed to the uppermost branches under the green foliage, its savage beasts and troops of monkeys, its gorgeous blue and green butterflies, its stunningly-colored, vivid-hued tropical birds, its air of silence and mystery, all called to the hunting ardor in him. Both he and Migi hoped that the Captain's next move would take him where some enterprise of mining or animal collecting would lead them back again to the jungle that they both loved.

On the morning of the third day a small boat put out from the old Portuguese quay that fronted the palace and the government buildings of the Dutch Residency. George reached for his glasses and trained them on it eagerly.

"Here he comes, now, Migi!" he cried. "That's father, in the stern—I'd know that white officer's coat and visored cap of his anywhere! And the fellow in

the red turban rowing is Kubing, our serang. Now we'll know something!"

Migi grinned broadly under his bang of blue-black hair, and his merry brown eyes, almond-shaped yet straight set across his small, delicate Malay nose, danced with excitement.

"Cap'n Sloan, him go *blakang tana* (jungle)—*sahya fikir* (I think)," he grinned, mixing up Malay and pidgin-English in his usual glorious verbal jumble.

"What makes you think he is going into the jungle, Migi?" laughed George, indulgently, at the young Dyak.

"*Sahya fikir!*—I *think* so!" quoth Migi sententiously, and there you had the whole Malay philosophy in a nutshell!

"In other words, that's your hunch, eh?" chuckled George. "I hope so, too. We'll know pretty soon."

The gig neared the Midget Steamer, with the Cap'n bellowing out news while he was yet a cable length off. "I sold our pearls, son!" his voice shouted across the glassy water. "Got twenty thousand for 'em! Banked it, and cabled your mother to come out East! She'll be here in 'bout three months. Sa-ay! Hosts of Pharaoh, son, but we've landed a bully commission!" he yelled. "Tell you all about it when we get alongside—give way on those oars, lad!" he wheezed at Kubing, running too much out of breath to call any more news.

Presently the gig shot alongside, and in a trice the Cap'n had climbed the side ladder and stumped aboard. "Warm up the engine, boys—we're going to Sumatra!" he announced, greeting George and Migi. "You know His Imperial Nibs, the Sultan of Tidore, son?" he inquired, grinning broadly through the tropic tan that had pickled his face to the color of a beet.

George nodded, smiling delightedly, for he felt that something good and exciting was coming.

"Well, it seems I've made a hit with the Sultan. He insists I'm jest the man for him in the animal collecting line, and he's tired of dealing with old Mohamet Ariff up at Singapore—and getting cheated—so, when I called on him at his palace back in the hills he was all for us going to Sumatra for him. He wants a black leopard, dead or alive; a python alive, the biggest one we can find; a clouded leopard and a whole consignment of monkeys for his menagerie. Money's no object—we can send in our bill and he'll foot it. Like that, son?" queried the Cap'n facetiously, digging George in the ribs with a pudgy thumb.

"Oh—lead us to it!" gasped George. "C'mon, Migi, what are we standing here for?—We'll have the engine ready in half an hour, dad! And what's this about mother coming out—whoops!" he yelled, beside himself with joy.

"Yep. She's coming here instead of us v'yaging

back home. She leaves New York February tenth. That'll get her to Colombo 'bout April, and then she takes a Dutch steamer to Batavia, where we meet her with the *Mauie*. She'll get here jest about the opening of the dry season, and meanwhile we'll clean up this Sumatra business," rumbled the Cap'n, mopping his face with a blue bandanna.

George and Migi swarmed below to warm up the engine, while the Cap'n and the serang set about heaving up the anchor short. Migi unbanked the boiler fires. George opened the steam drains, started up his condenser pumps, and let live steam come screeching through the by-passes into the cylinders of the *Mauie's* hundred-horsepower compound engine. Presently he turned her over, slowly, back and forth a few times, and then, at the ready bell, the anchor was broken out and the *Mauie* got under way and stood out of the coral-bottomed harbor of Amboina.

From there to Palembang in Sumatra is a cool seventeen hundred miles, but the fast little *Mauie* did it in six days; through the Buotong Passage and across the Java Sea, due west, arriving at Banca Straits on the evening of the fifth day.

Palembang is a hundred miles up the river from the coast. Imagine a wide bend of three miles of river, crowded along both banks with bamboo houses on piles and floats out in the stream, where one goes to market in a canoe (for the shops are a long distance

out from shore) and you have the Malay town of Palembang. The *Mauie* anchored out in midstream, with dozens of proas and junks swinging to the current above and below her. George and Migi now almost lived in the ship's gig, exploring the water lanes and canals along the shop fronts, buying ship stores, and every other day or so taking the Captain up to visit an old hadji who lived back in the flooded jungle above the town. This old fellow was in constant touch with the tribesmen, the Orang Ulu of the interior, who advised their hadji by runners whenever a tiger, leopard, rhino or any wild beast whatever of interest to the menagerie world would be reported by any of the villagers.

After some ten days of waiting and endless powwows in floods of voluble Malay chatter, a native came alongside the *Mauie* one morning with word from the hadji that a black leopard had been located far up in the mountains in the interior. He was a cattle stealer and a man-eater, and had evidently been driven out of some district to the west still ruled over by native princes and therefore swarming with wild beasts.

"Jerusha's Cats, son!" exploded the Cap'n, when he had finally gotten the matter straight out of the tangle of talk and exaggeration which constituted the Malay's message. "There's luck for ye! A black leopard ain't yanked out of *every* passel of jungle! We'll go right up-river to-day! Start loading our

stores and camp outfit in the gig, son, while I break out our rifles and ammunition."

He stumped back to the cuddy. George and Migi and two of the Dyaks packed up food, bedding mats, a tent and cooking paraphernalia, and stowed them in the gig. The Cap'n had meanwhile shifted into khaki hunting gear and now came out on deck with a heavy rifle for himself and George in each hand and canvas belts of cartridges hung over his arm. Migi fetched his long iron-wood sumpitan and laid it carefully in the bow sheets of the gig. With its bamboo quiver of poisoned darts and its heavy spear blade lashed to the muzzle of the blowgun like a bayonet, he felt himself better armed for the jungle than with any white man's gun. A *parang-ihlang*, the Dyak war sword, and the inevitable kriss stuck in his belt completed his armament. For outfit he carried a *cadjan* or square mat slung in a tight roll on his back. This was house, blanket and mattress in one to him; also an umbrella, for it had a pocket sewed across one corner so that he could wear the thing like a peak over his head when it rained.

The Cap'n unfurled the gig's sail and they shoved off. She swept upstream, and they were joined shortly after by the long log canoe of the hadji, who with his son joined their expedition above Palembang. Two days of alternate rowing and sailing around bends and up reaches brought them to the foothills of

the mountains, where the river became too swift for the gig to navigate further. There they stopped and beached her, near a trail which came down to the landing, and here was a Sumatran village of queer peaky huts, a jumble of pointed gables all curved up like the eaves of pagodas. Every foot of their wooden walls and posts was covered with elaborate carvings; the huts resembled ornamental corn cribs more than any other white man's structure, for their roofs far overhung the body of the houses and their walls sloped outward from the ground up.

Past the village the road inland to the mountains wound through irregular clearings, with wild banana trees growing in clumps by the roadside and stately palms rising amongst the huts. News of their landing went out into the back country like wildfire and crowds of natives came in to stare and jabber in a Sumatran dialect that was scarce Malay. After a whole evening of talk between the hadji and the village chief, a guide was engaged to go with them at dawn to where the black leopard had been marked down in the mountain fastnesses.

Next morning, after a short march along the state road, their native branched off into a narrow trail that plunged immediately under the vast leafy arches of the high forest.

"My stars!" ejaculated the Cap'n, mopping his brow as he peered about him through the hot, shady depths

of the jungle. "This is the real thing, boys! You gotta keep your eyes right smart peeled and shoot quick and sudden in here! There's not much for us to fear from tigers in the daytime. Old Stripes always slinks out of sight till nightfall; but Spots, he'll stand his ground and fight, every time!"

"But isn't the leopard considerably smaller than the tiger, dad?" objected George. "He can't do much against such rifles as these!" he declared, looking confidently down at the heavy .35 Winchester lying in the crook of his arm.

"'Tain't that, son; it's the habits of the creeter and his strength and orneryness. You'll find him, layin' for what comes along the trail, high up on some great tree limb—and he don't care whether it's man or deer that he springs for, either! Hev ye any idee of a leopard's strength? Well, I'll tell ye," quoth the Cap'n oracularly, waving his free arm about. "This happened once, at an animal show in Singapore, 'twas, and I saw it. There was a spotted kitty in that show, and her trick was to leap twenty feet and land on a big iron ball that hung by a chain. Welp—she missed it, the time I saw her—and, Sword of Jehoshaphat, but didn't she flare up hot as pepper, right sudden quick! Like a flash of light she hit that iron ball a crack with her paw and it broke the chain and druv the ball clear across the cage, where it bent the iron bars! Don't talk to *me*!—you watch these trees overhead mighty

careful as we go along, boys!" snorted the Cap'n implacably, leading on with his heavy .50-110 express rifle poised in both hands for instant shooting.

The party moved silently along in single file. Presently a shrill squalling broke out ahead of them. It seemed to come from a little to one side in the depths of the jungle.

"*Munyeet!* (Monkey!)" yelled the Malay guide, springing into the underbrush. The squalling grew louder and changed to short barks as the monkey perceived the man coming for him. George and Migi ran in to where the small simian insurrection was going on, and then laughed until their sides ached, for, lashed to the trunk of a tree was an ordinary blue bottle covered with pandanus leaves and a large monkey had his paw in it and was hopping up and down tugging at it frantically, squalling at them with ludicrous rage.

"There's the funniest trap ever invented, boys!" heehawed the Cap'n as they watched the angry monkey. "All there is to it is a little sugar-water and a ball of rag inside that bottle. The monkey put in his paw to grab the rag, and now he hasn't sense enough to let go of it and get his paw out—did you ever!"

Without more ado the native seized the monkey by the nape of his neck, and then with finger and thumb pinched his elbow, forcing his fingers to release the rag ball. He then pulled Mr. Monkey away from the bottle, gagged his jaws with a stick, trussed him up,

and with the captive hanging over a stick they set forth along the trail again.

The going got wilder and wilder as they climbed up into the mountain ravines. After a long silent march, away off to the left in the jungle came a distant squealing and trumpeting.

"Hist!" exclaimed Captain John, as they all stopped to listen. "Marsh elephants!" he declared. "Too small to be worth capturing, compared to those of India and Siam, so they're let alone by 'most everybody——"

"*Haie!*" interrupted Migi with a sudden yell. He cast his spear aloft, and at the same instant George's rifle sprang to shoulder and crashed out up into the foliage. A ferocious snarl, a spitting and coughing sounded above them. Then the air seemed filled with flying claws and paws striking out, as a large cat-like animal fell, its head, with ears flattened and teeth bared in a hideous wrinkle, snarling at them with diabolical, murderous intent.

"*Look out!!*" shouted the Cap'n, springing to one side. His heavy express roared out and a howl of rage answered it as the leopard bounded down among them where they had all just stood. Migi's spear still stuck in his right flank; George and his father leaped back, covering him with their rifle muzzles ready to fire again. But the big express bullet had scuppered him. They watched the wild ferocity die out in the

green eyeballs, as with a convulsive leap the leopard fell over on his side and lay gasping. No one spoke for a moment; they all stood breathing heavily with shock and surprise.

"Sent from heaven!" chortled the Cap'n at length, finding his voice and his good humor at the same instant in the relief of the moment. "No one hurt?—Hosts of Pharaoh, boys, it's a *clouded* leopard! And he was up there watching us all the time we were listening to those elephants! Good eye, and good spear shot, Migi!" he laughed, gripping the Dyak boy's brown hand warmly. "You saved us all that time!"

"Me see um! Jump! Shoot spear!" grinned Migi. "Gun, him go-bang! All kill!" he laughed uproariously.

They examined the savage little leopard curiously. Beautifully marked, his fur was clouded like a tortoiseshell tabby's—an exceedingly rare species. Smaller than the ordinary spotted leopard, he had nevertheless the same dangerous instincts of lying in wait up trees and springing upon whatever might pass beneath.

The hadji and his son now climbed down out of the trees in which they had taken refuge and set about skinning out the pelt.

"I guess we'd better halt for a rest, now, endurin' the heat of the day," remarked the Cap'n watching them. "This kitten'll do for a starter. The jungle's

gettin' mighty hot and moist, and it won't do to move about much, now, until the cool of the evening."

The party slung their hammocks and spread out their mat cadjans for a noon-day siesta. Until after four it would be foolhardy to attempt any further march, for the thermometer was due to climb to 125 degrees in another hour—and stay there!

Along about five o'clock they took up the march again and stopped for the night about five miles farther on, up at a little plateau on the mountain flank, where it was cool and a noisy brook rippled around a bend. Here the tent was pitched, a fire started, and the natives spread their mats out under a fly with mosquito bar hanging down all around its edges. The hadji explained that about a mile above here was a water hole where most of the jungle folk came down to drink and bathe. It was decided to kill a deer and stake out the carcass at the edge of the water hole. Watching it at night, they could await the coming of the black leopard, for this region, the hadji declared, was his present hunting ground. At dusk they went up to reconnoiter the spot.

"These black ones are larger and more ferocious than the ordinary spotted kind, boys—and besides, there might be a tiger around," quoth the Cap'n, looking over the ground. "We don't want to be in any ground hide, in such case, or we're likely to get nabbed

from behind! Up that little thorn tree will be the place for us, I jedge."

He pointed out a stout thorn tree which grew on the jungle edge, commanding the pebbly beach of the water hole. Up it climbed Migi with his parang, and soon he had cleared a space in its depths and had begun a screen of the hacked off boughs. George and the harji cut bamboo poles for a platform and passed them up, and soon Migi had a serviceable "hide" ready for them. Then the natives returned to camp, leaving George and his father and Migi on watch.

Darkness fell. The tropical stars came out, filling the heavens with a blaze of splendor, such starlight as we never see in our colder northern climates. Hardly had the gloom hid the details of the jungle, before night noises of animals coming down to drink filled the air. Troops of monkeys came first, jabbering and chattering and chasing one another all over the beach. After them there were little, half-heard rustlings, and what looked like moving turtles creeping across the pebbles—small rodents of every kind. As the party watched and listened, far off in the jungle sounded the hoarse, ropy caterwaul of the great hunting cats; once or twice, even, the long-drawn hunger call of Lord Tiger, out for his nightly foray. Then, through the darkness came heavy breathings of cattle, Sumatran wild bulls from the depths of the jungle. They waded in and drank deep, blowing from their moist noses like

the sigh of bellows. After them the dainty thud of hoofs on loose stones betokened the arrival of deer, and now the Sloans cocked their rifle hammers noiselessly, for with them would come the carnivorous hunting cats, leopard or tiger, or both.

All was now dead silence throughout the jungle; an ominous, foreboding silence which showed that They were about! The deer drank nervously, stopping just long enough for a plunge and a frightened leap back to the safety of the jungle.

Suddenly a thunderous screech rent the silence of the night. The remnants of the deer herd scattered with a frantic scramble of hoofs. There was an agonized bleat and the gurgle of some animal being submerged and drowned under water. The Sloans strained their eyes, striving to pierce the gloom, but they could see nothing. It was the black leopard himself, George was certain, black as the night—and as invisible! The agitated surface of the pool danced with myriad stars reflected from its smooth, rolling wavelets. George peered and aimed his rifle—in vain! Nothing that he dared pull trigger on appeared over the sights! He raised his head and stared at the pool, eagerly, shivering with excitement, for he knew it would not be a moment more before the leopard would leap away with his prey in his teeth, like a cat carrying a mouse. Then his eyes made out—*something*! Among those myriad dancing points of starlight was

a space where they did *not* show! He aimed his rifle at the spot, but the faint vision was instantly lost in the blur of the sights.

Then an inspiration, a grand idea, came whizzing into his mind. The leopard would rise, presently, and he would blot out those star reflections in the pool above him! *Then* would be the time to shoot! Carefully picking a bright star glint above the dim black bulk that was the leopard's form, George sighted on it, held steady—and waited.

A thrill went through him like an electric shock—that star reflection had ceased shining! Instantly George pulled trigger. Upon the crash of the rifle a deafening roar rang out. The dropped deer splashed back into the pool, and then something black and awful, without shape or form, charged swiftly toward their tree. The Cap'n's express barked out its streak of flame, but *It* came on, vague and indistinguishable, but roaring vengefully below them. It would not be vague an instant longer, but striking for them with sledgehammer blows of paws armed with scimitar claws, George realized as he fired again, blindly, hoping to hit, but more than expecting to have to use the muzzle of his gun as a frantic prod to fend off the black terror.

With a hideous snarl, paralyzing every nerve with freezing, animal fright, the leopard launched himself like a thunderbolt for their hide. A thick bough,

smashed aside like a straw, broke in front of them—and then Migi yelled out like a wild beast, driving his spear full into the throat of the hungry death striking at them with flying claws. The Cap'n's express went off with a stunning crash at the same instant and the black leopard fell back, striking right and left at the branches around him. The tree shivered and shook under them; Migi pulled himself back out of the tangle of thorns where he had been driven by the impact of the spring. Then they all waited, hearts pounding so that they could hear the pulse beats through their open mouths, while, with a flurry and a grunt and a hoarse growl, savage to the last, the life went out down there in the jungle bushes below.

"And that's that!" exploded the Cap'n with a mighty surge of relief as they listened to make sure that the black leopard would strike no more. "How did you ever manage to hit him in the first place, son?" he inquired curiously. "I thought surely he would get away, as no one could see him a-tall."

"Oh, well," laughed George nervously, "I just sighted on the reflection of a star in the pool, and when he rose and blotted it out, I knew it was him and let him have it. That was all!"

"Right there with the pinch hit, son—as usual!" grunted the Cap'n admiringly. "Good work! And you, too, Migi—that spear of yours was the boy! Welp—the Sultan's got his black kitten, all right!"

CHAPTER VII

IN QUEST OF PARADISE BIRDS

"Good-by, Migi!"

George gripped his Dyak boy chum's hand strongly, and tears of emotion sprang to his eyes. He had been more than a chum, for to Migi George owed his very life. Their friendship had been strong and unbroken since that day when Migi had come into their camp on Ke'. Now the dull gold ring on his finger, set with a glowing ruby, proclaimed that the Dyak boy was no longer just Migi, but Datu Migi, for his father, Datu Bulieng, had sent a proa to Palembang with runners bearing this simple token. It signified that Migi was to return home and assume his share of governing the Dyak principality ruled over by Datu Bulieng. Across the Carimata Straits, by Biliton and Banca it had come, and the proa already was waiting for them at Palembang when they had returned to the *Mawie* from the highlands of Sumatra.

"Good-by, Tuan George. Me never forget you!" said Migi huskily, shaking George's hand for the last time after paying his adieus to the Cap'n. He could

scarce keep his eyes off the ring that told him that he was now a power in his own people, but this friendship with the Sloans had been sweet, crowded as it had been with those comradeships in danger and adventure that cement the love of man for man. Even now they could overhear the Cap'n telling a visitor the story of their last adventure together, the capture of the great python, where Migi had saved George's life.

The stranger was peering curiously at the huge creature, asleep in his bamboo crate on the deck of the *Mauie*.

"My stars, man, but them pesky boys were right in the thick of it—you listen to me!" the Cap'n was telling him, while a busy bandanna mopped the perspiration from his weather-beaten brow. "When we were up in Siak and had jest come back from a leopard hunt, in comes a runner to our old hadji tellin' how a great python had et one of his pigs. I know the old boy would stay right there for a matter of three weeks or so, asleep and dygestin' his pig, so we set about making this here crate. Then we wheeled it up-country, by bullocks, and carried it into the jungle. Hosts of Pharaoh, but here was *one* serpent, man dear! Sleepin' as peaceful as peaceful—so we crep' up and slipped a noose over his neck and led it back through the door of the cage and out through the palin's behind. Then we put two more ropes around his tail and led 'em out to trees near by. My idee was to haul

on the neck rope, paying out on the tail ropes so as to keep him stretched out straight, where he couldn't rattle none, an' so ease him into the crate.

"Welp!—the minute we begun on the neck rope, the old boy woke up! See? He jumped and doubled like a flash. Migi got a turn around a tree with his tail rope and hung fast, but the old hadji lost his nerve and dropped hisn. And then there was *doin's!*" exploded the Cap'n impressively. "That snake—twenty-eight feet long he was, an' thick as a tree—he thros around and knocked over a lot of the niggers, an' the next I know he'd thrown a coil around George, who was tryin' to herd 'em all out of danger. It was all done quick as a flash, ye know. There was George, helpless as a kitten—one good chance to constrict, and that python'd crush every bone in his body, with the blood spurtin' out of mouth and nose and ears! My soul! I shoved my neck rope into a native's hand and yelled to him to hang fast while I dashed for the snake. The old feller lunged back his head as I come, rippin' another yard of rope through my native's hands, and then I sprung for him, throwin' my coat over his head. He threw me around like ye've seen a loose fire hose throw the men hangin' to it—and then another coil of him loops around my George! It looks all up for him, to me, for I wasn't doin' any particular good, when here comes Migi, in one long leap from his tree. That Dyak lad knew jest what to do! He sunk his fingers

into the python's neck, jest back of his head—as he told us later—so as to paralyze the big spinal nerve temporarily. I felt the snake go slack and saw George pry himself out of the coils, while the niggers hauled away on their ropes and stretched him out straight. The snake had Migi's arm in his mouth, but we pried his jaws open with a club and got him free. After that there was nothin' to it. He slapped around somethin' tremendous, but little by little we hauled his head into the crate, paying out tail rope foot by foot. Then George got a rope around his middle and we hauled that into the crate, and finally the tail, and then shet the door. Jerusha's Cats, but the Sultan'll be proud of that python! It's the biggest one in any menagerie in the world!"

The stranger looked around curiously at the white bandage on Migi's arm, as the Dyak lad got into the canoe that was waiting for him alongside.

"Rather sporty chap, that, don'tyerknow!" he drawled. "I'd like to shake hands with him."

They all went over for a final farewell. George could hardly speak.

"Good-by, Tuan George!" called Migi from the canoe. "Come to Long House, again, soon!"

George thrilled. *Tuan* George! Only men, not boys, were called that! Involuntarily his hand went to his upper lip, where a thin fuzz told him that Nature was fast turning him into a Tuan, not an *anak* (child).

The Cap'n laughed gruffly as he turned from waving to Migi.

"Tuan George, eh! Le's see, son, how old are you gettin' to be!" he exclaimed. "My stars, if you ain't all of eighteen! You may well feel your upper lip, son! There'll be a man's work for you to do, soon, you mark me!"

But George did not reply. His eyes were all on Migi. His chum was going, to assume the rule of part of a principality, a man's work indeed. Their happy days of carefree adventures together were over. Might they meet again, often and often, during his wanderings over the Archipelago!

He turned at length to rejoin the Cap'n and the stranger.

"This is Ben Munby, George," said the Cap'n, introducing him. "I've engaged him to help run the engine with you and take Migi's place. And now get the engine ready and stand by, boys! We've got to make the run back to Amboina before any of these monkeys get a chance to die on our hands."

The Cap'n stumped forward to see about breaking out the anchor. George found himself with a comfortable looking young English boy of a little more than his own age. He turned out to be a somewhat experienced marine engineer, having been the Third on some tramp steamer, and they got on well together. Soon the *Mauie* was under way, passing Migi's proa

drifting down the river. Again the two chums waved their farewells, and George went below with a sad heart, not inclined to make any advances, for the present, with young Munby. However, the English lad was undemonstrative and self-sufficient, after the manner of his breed the world over, and they made the trip with a slowly ripening friendship developing between them.

Three days after their arrival at Amboina the Cap'n's boat came out from the docks. Beside the Cap'n in the stern sheets of the gig sat a gorgeous creature, some under official from the Sultan's retinue, most likely. George eyed him as the gig approached. Resplendent in a stunning turban of fiery red silk, a gorgeous jacket of iridescent yellows that a Gérôme would have envied, a bright green silk sash with a couple of pearl-handled pistols stuck in it, this dark-skinned Mussulman, a man somewhat under middle age, seemed dressed for a part in the Arabian Nights.

"Meet Suib, George," grunted the Cap'n, as he and the Arab came over the rail and advanced smiling.

The man of the turban salaamed reverently. "Greetings, Heaven-born!" he murmured, as George stepped up to shake hands.

"Suib is one of the Sultan's best *shikaris* (hunters), George," explained the Cap'n. "I've been having a long talk with the old gentleman, these last few days, and he wants me to stay here awhile and undertake

some rather delicate negotiations with the Dutch Resident. So we have picked you, my boy, to go with Suib on a trip to one of the Sultan's islands on the East Coast of New Guinea. Suib, here, speaks English and Malay, and also understands the dialects of these savage Pacific tribes. The island is called Wairibi, and is nominally under the Sultan's rule. It's too small for the Dutch to send a gunboat there, unless there is an insurrection or something, but there's an uneasy rumor about—some sort of trouble brewing down there—and also we hear that paradise birds abound. How'd you like to go down there, in a native proa, and see what's up, and try to get us a few paradise birds?"

"Glad to, father!" beamed George, smiling at Suib. He wanted to yell, "*Whee!*" and caper about the deck, but could do no such thing in the presence of such a gorgeous court official as this Mohammedan!

They went to the cuddy aft to talk over details.

"This may mean something more for you, son," rumbled the Cap'n confidentially when they were once alone. "If you show tact and judgment, the Sultan may appoint you Rajah of that island, as the Dutch would be glad to have a white man in charge there. The people are barbarous savages, and the East Coast swarms with pirates from Jobie, New Caledonia and the like, so you may have a row or two. I'm almost afraid to let you go alone, but Land's Cats, son, you

might as well, though! You're almost grown; many a young Assistant Resident is hardly more than your age, in these islands. There's one white trader there, by the name of Kegley, but he's too busy to go into the interior much, so you can't count on him."

He handed George a small canvas pouch to go on his belt.

"The white man's mainstay, in a tight place, George," chuckled the Cap'n, pointing out three small nickel cylinders inside. "These have three-second fuses. Touch 'em to your cigarette and throw 'em, if you *have* to. And here's my .38 Officer's Model. The best six-gun in the world. You may need it on this expedition! Never pick a fight with the natives, if it can possibly be avoided, but if you *do* have to fight, hand it to 'em strong! It's the only way they can be taught to respect you—and us."

Three days later George, with Suib at his side, set out around Ceram in a large native proa. Their course lay through Bouro Strait, bound for Wairibi, a large island off the East Coast. Bottles dangled from the yardarms of the huge mat sails of the proa, while George stood on deck, practising the gunman's throw—the revolver swung up from a leg holster—and with satisfying frequency one would smash to splinters as a shot went home. Ammunition was now no object to George; it was up to him to learn quick shooting during the short time of his voyage. Neither were

bottles, although each one would be worth much in trade with the Papuan savages of Wairibi.

There are two ways of throwing a gun. In the ordinary throw, known to every cowman in the West, the gun swings up from the holster with thumb over hammer, and, when it is snapped down to horizontal, the hammer is released and the gun barks as it comes down on the mark. It *looks* effective, and always has seemed spectacular—to the tenderfoot—but there is just a split second of lost motion to it, so the real gunman passes it up. *His* way is to draw with thumb on hammer—the base not the ball of the thumb—and snap off as the gun comes up to horizontal—quick as lightning, and quite as accurate as the slower way. It takes lots of practice to get this throw down fine, and many a would-be gunman has shot off his own toes in learning it.

Suib watched George's practice morosely. It was none of his philosophy that Heaven-born, the Sahib, should see fit to waste perfectly good bottles, worth much in trade with the heathen, when gourds would do just as well! But it bored him—Allah, how it bored him!—even more than the thoughtless plaudits of these Papuan and Javanese swine who formed the crew of the proa!

As if to make the South Sea setting of his shooting gallery perfect, a volcano of the Gilolo Group loomed out of the sea to port, as George peppered away at the

dangling bottles. A perfect cone, its rock-clad peak rose out of a sea of green jungle, with a lazy column of smoke tumbling out of its crater. At its base, developing out of the clouds that hung on its flanks, they could make out the dim outlines of the island, the volcano dominating it all.

George stopped shooting, his guns hanging at his sides. "Reminds me of a picture from my kid geography!" he muttered, puckering up his eyes from the glare of the sun on the sea.

Just then a cry rang out from the lookouts forward. "*Véla! Véla!-jurugan!*" they yelled, tumbling aft, to surround the Javanese captain with violent gesticulations. Your Papuan is nothing if not excitable and violent, and an immense amount of palaver followed, as they pointed out to him a sail, a mere speck in the sea, over near the mainland. George recognized "*Véla*" as the ancient Portuguese for sail, still current in these islands, but the rest was Greek to him, being all in Papuan. Suib stood aloof, a scornful smile curling his lips.

"By the beard of the Prophet, Heaven-born, how these swine do chatter!" he exclaimed, turning to George. "They want the captain to ask you to put up your guns!"

"Land's sake—why?" queried George, with an incredulous laugh.

"Allah only knows!" retorted Suib. "It seems that

this is a very dangerous part of the sea and they don't want anything, like those pieces of bottles, dropped overboard, lest it should offend the *hantus* (spirits) down below. They take this strange sail coming for a proof that the spirits are angry."

George grinned as he sheathed his guns. "Anything to oblige the heathen!" he exclaimed, cheerfully.

The strange proa was now well down inside the rim of the horizon and bearing down on them swiftly, its tall bamboo spars sticking up like the ends of a huge curved fan. The chattering among the crew increased as George sent Suib for his binoculars, while bows, spears and rattan shields made their appearance on deck forward. The Papuans buckled on their shields, each with a hole in the center through which an arm could be thrust, a flap protecting it, while the hand could grasp the bow, the eyes peering over the top of the shield. Soon fully half the crew were so armed, and thus the proa was got ready for battle, for anything might be expected of a strange sail in these seas.

The *jurugan* (captain) came up to George anxiously. "What do you see, Sahib? What sort of weapons do they carry?" he inquired nervously, as George searched the proa with his glasses.

"She's crowded with naked blacks," advised George. "Some of them have long guns, and there seem to be lots of spears with toothed edges."

"*Ai!* Shark's teeth! They are East Coasters—

pirates!" cried out the captain, jumping up and down with fear and excitement. "*Bajak! Bajak!* (Pirates! Pirates!)" he yelled through cupped hands to his crew.

A babel of guttural shouts answered him. Ancient, miquelet-lock, Singapore muskets were frantically loaded, and on the forward deck a wild war dance started. The crew of the proa numbered about thirty men, some of them Bugis and Javanese, most of them Papuans.

"Looks like a very decent row coming off, Suib," grinned George. "Get my .35 repeater out of my cabin, and bring all the ammunition we have."

Suib flashed white teeth of satisfaction. "As Heaven-born wills!" he nodded energetically. "Allah send that we come to strokes with them also!" he added, laying his hand on the jeweled hilt of his scimitar. He trotted to the little rattan hut on deck, which was George's sleeping quarters, and soon returned with the two rifles.

"Peace, if possible—fight, if we must, Captain," said George, turning to the *jurugan*. "It is not well for the White Man to mix in native broils."

"There is never peace with pirates!" frowned the *jurugan* grimly. "However, I shall give them the peace sign, as the Sahib directs."

The hostile proa bore down close aboard, and then hauled her sail around, reversing her direction and thus strating herself off again on the other tack. Her

wild crew yelled loudly, brandishing their weapons and answering the peace signals of the captain with derisive shouts. Then, at a sign from him, one of the Papuans leaned far out over the side, baptizing his mop of hair with sea water, the Islanders' universal sign for peace. His answer was a singing arrow of iron-wood, which stuck quivering in the gunwale, its head covered with backward-pointing barbs of shark's teeth.

"War! by Jerry!" barked George, quivering with excitement. "Here's for that ugly buck up in the fore rigging!" The heavy rifle roared and the man spun like a top and dropped into the sea. An explosion of extravagant negro merriment arose from their own decks, and then the engagement became general, clouds of arrows and puffs of white smoke from the native Singapore muskets on both sides filling the air with the sharp spang and hiss of missiles.

George kept pinching himself, dazed, unbelieving. He seemed to have been transported back to another century, to the days of Captain Cook. "Gee-roo! A row like this in this enlightened twentieth century!" he muttered wonderingly as he lay below the proa's bulwarks, sighting through a notch between the bamboo railings. "Who'd have thought that anywhere in these islands you could really pick up a pirate ruction!"

"By the hair of Mohammed!" laughed Suib, whang-

ing away with his long Arab gun. "It would be well not to leave one of these pigs alive!" he snorted with a true Mohammedan's contempt for all Papuans and foreigners. "That makes my fourth, Sahib——" as the gun spat again—"consider the headdress of yonder swine at the steering gear. Is it not the will of God that he should die?" he sniffed.

The weapon spoke as he laughed, but the steersman made a sudden movement, which saved his life, for on the instant the hostile proa tacked again and soared toward them, evidently bent on ramming and getting to close quarters.

"Now, Sahib—the steel!" grinned Suib, drawing his keen scimitar and making the air sing with it. George fired his rifle for the last time, and then jumped to his feet with the heavy, blue .38 in hand.

There was a crash of bamboo on rattan as the two proas came together, and then a mad din as the pirates swarmed aboard, their faces, hideously tattooed, glaring over tall rattan shields. A peculiar, oval breast and neck guard of white boar's tusks proclaimed them savages from the Tast Coast of New Guinea, still wild and cannibalistic. This guard, aided by stout shields that were musket-ball proof, was more or less effective against the spears and krisses of the Malays.

The crew retreated around George and Suib, for with every bark of the six-gun a man fell, and Suib's long scimitar flamed like a flash of light at the fore-

front of the fray. Then the *jurugan* fell, with a long, jagged spear through his shoulder, and the battle raged hotter and hotter around the rattan house on deck.

Then came an unlooked-for diversion, for four of their own steersmen had sneaked aboard the pirate proa through the steering hole in the side and a roaring sheet of flame swept up its mat sail. The pirates dashed back to their ship, followed closely by the leaders from the proa, still thrusting and stabbing with kriss and spear, Suib lunging at their head. George was forced to stop and reload his guns. Man is a primitive animal, he realized, as he crouched behind the house, virtually defenseless. With all his centuries of invention, the sword and the spear are still the only two weapons that keep on being effective in hand-to-hand fighting!

Their own proa had now veered quite a distance away, and George took up the abandoned repeater, reloading it and putting in a handy shot now and then, but the fight was nearly over on the burning proa, for the survivors of the pirate crew were leaping overboard to save their lives and swimming off to bits of wreckage, pursued by clouds of arrows. She was now a roaring mass of flames, and the *jurugan's* people also left her, swimming valiantly back to their own ship, to clamber aboard with shouts of victory. Suib's flaming turban was the last to arrive.

"Allah be praised—what a gorgeous fight, Sahib!"

he chortled with glistening teeth. "Consider my nose, Heaven-born, and the eye of the *jurumuddi* (steersman)—both are of a pulp, Sahib. But, by the grace of God, we have prevailed!" he ejaculated, crossing his palms piously.

George got out his surgical kit and bound up the nose, which was smashed and torn from the blow of a war club. He then went to the *jurugan*, who lay wounded on deck. The long iron-wood spear, lined on both sides with barbs of shark's teeth, protruded a foot beyond the captain's shoulder. It could neither be withdrawn nor pulled through. George shook his head; it seemed a hopeless case to him.

But the native doctor, a grizzled old villain, black as soot and with a wooly mop of white hair, came up from cutting out arrows and spearheads from the crew and took charge. He ran a long, poniard-like knife down the spear, with its edge inward and the back facing the line of shark's teeth. The Javanese captain bore it stoically, eyes closed, teeth clenched. Busily working with the primitive surgical instrument, the old medicine man pried the flesh away from both rows of barbs, sawed off the shaft end of the spearhead, and then, with a slow, undulating movement, he worked its head through the wound. Then a hot iron was brought up to sear the flesh. George turned away, sickened. He could not believe that a human being could bear such suffering.

Suib curled his lip disdainfully. "It is nothing, Sahib. Soon he will have a fever, and then they will sweat him. After which—Pish!—an honorable scar! . . . Ha!" he exclaimed suddenly, glancing over the side and then grabbing up the rifle, "there is yet one of those swine left alive!"

He aimed for a black head bobbing in the water, its owner swimming towards them. George knocked up the gun. "Wait! Take him prisoner. I want to talk to him," he commanded. "Tell them not to shoot."

No one in the crew, however, was paying the least attention to the swimmer, so he and Suib were the sole reception committee. As the head came nearer they saw that its owner was but a child, a little black picaninny, surely not over eight years old. His little legs struck out like a frog's, as he swam easily toward the proa, a genial negro grin smiling up at them confidently.

Suib drew his sword, as the tiny muscular hands clawed at the bamboo bulwarks, and he aimed a cut across their knuckles.

"Don't!" commanded George. "I forbid it!"

"It is but a child, Heaven-born, and babies are cheap and too plentiful as it is," retorted Suib, sulkily. "This one will be a mere nuisance. I opined that it was the will of Allah that he should die."

"Help me up with him," ordered George, grabbing a round, sturdy little arm. "And now go get an inter-

preter," for neither he nor Suib could make out the gibberish the youngster was jabbering at them.

Presently one of the crew came up, and after a vast amount of talk, Suib turned to George. "He says he was captured off a Goram proa, Sahib, and all his people were killed, but they kept him."

"What for, for goodness' sake!" demanded George wonderingly.

Suib hung his head sheepishly. "To eat him, Heaven-born," he grinned, as George flushed with a white man's repulsion at the thought. "It is the custom with these swine, though it is an order of the Government that it shall be taboo."

George sat stunned. Somehow he had been wont to consider cannibalism as a relic of Robinson Crusoe times. Now the fact was driven in upon him that men still ate their enemies with relish. He recalled the story going about Amboina when he left, of that native who killed and ate his wife only the year before "because him talk'm plenty, too much," and so bored him! The native judge, too, had given him a verdict of justifiable homicide in self-defense, and Amboina had voted it a huge joke, the whites hardly crediting it at all, until the missionaries had confirmed the tale. It seemed unbelievable, for the year 1901, so accustomed are we to our civilization and steamships.

"However," went on Suib, imperturbably, "the child jumped overboard and swam away while we were

fighting—and here he is. Shall we not cast him into the sea again, Heaven-born, now that the Sahib is through with him?” he asked, seizing the child’s arm eagerly. But the little fellow bit and kicked vigorously, squirming away from Suib and twining himself around George’s legs.

“Heavens, no!” gasped George, soothing the youngster’s screams. “Sometimes, Suib, you lose your grip on the humanities altogether—you sure do!”

Suib looked blank, but salaamed reverently. “It is as Heaven-born wills,” he replied, resignedly. “What, then, will the Sahib do with him?”

“Do? I shall adopt him, of course! Maybe we can find his people when we get to Wairibi. Give him something to eat—no—bring *here* something,” he corrected himself, as the child began to scream again, objecting most valiantly to being torn from his newly discovered protector.

While Suib was attending to the little castaway, the crew hauled in tack and sheet and veered the proa on her course again. The tropic twilight fell swiftly as they billowed across the calm Molucca seas, while in the darkness eddyling streams of phosphorescent light rushed past the rudder blades in whirling sparks of fire. All that the steersmen, the *jurumuddis*, had to steer by was an obscure angle in their heads laid across the long windrows of the seas, but with it they set a course as true as if laid out on a chart and held to by

a rhumb line of a compass. During the monsoon the angle of the waves never varied; it was their compass, day and night. The sole other navigating instrument was half an empty cocoanut shell, floating in a bucket of water on deck. It had a tiny hole in its bottom, and sank in just one hour, when it was emptied and set afloat again, thus giving the hours of distance sailed.

The captain had a fever, as Suib had predicted, and got over it amazingly, as the calm days went by and the proa dipped over the smooth seas on her trip to Wairibi. Day after day slipped by, until over the horizon to the east appeared a cloud bank that became permanent. It was Wairibi and the roadstead of Aiou.

A palm-fringed beach, with low, jungle-clad hills rising gently back of it, developed out of the mists on the sea, and presently the proa ran into a cove and drove her nose up on the sand, until the bow stuck out into the main street of Aiou between two palm-thatch huts built just above tidewater.

A crowd of native Papuans, Javanese, and Chinese traders surrounded them in a shouting, gesticulating crowd, as they stepped ashore. This trading settlement of Wairibi, George noted, was situated on a spit of sand, with anchorages among the coral reefs on both sides, so it was available for either the east or west monsoons. George's curious gaze roved down the length of its single street, lined on both sides with queer, peak-roofed bamboo-thatch houses, with tall

cocoanut palms like huge green feather dusters, growing up here and there, and the noses of seagoing proas projecting out into the street between the houses. And back of it lay the trackless jungle, the *blakang tana*, full of savages, a land almost unexplored, except along a small number of short river banks.

He and Suib were given the empty Government house at the end of the street, and for an hour they did nothing but watch the animated scene going on down its crowded length. Each house door swung, not on side hinges, but on ones made of rattan, at the top, so it could be raised up and held out as a sort of porch by a couple of stakes. Under it lounged its owner, here a Javanese, with peaked hat, bargaining with a naked savage for a bundle of sugarcane; yonder a Chinaman, in loose blue dress, with long glossy black queue, arguing with a tall, wooly-haired black chieftain over the amount of tripang to be traded for a brass gun; a little farther on a Bugis sailor was chipping with an adz at a proa plank for boat repairs; in the distance a hunter was coming into town from the jungle, with spear over shoulder and a *cuscus*, or native opossum, dangling in his hand. People squatted everywhere in the center of the street, gambling, cock fighting, working at pandanus-leaf boxes, washing sago—every one's business was in everybody's way! For domestic animals, a kangaroo, two tame *bobos*,

some fowls, and a pig or two wandered at will through the town.

One thing, however, George missed—the unrestrained, light-hearted, negro merriment characteristic of the Papuans. There seemed to be an air of dread, of repression about the place. Men looked over their shoulders, glanced furtively around buildings, and what children there were in the place kept close to the verandas. George first thought that it was due to the presence of traders and such a large admixture of foreign Chinese and Javanese, but that couldn't have been—the Papuan character is too irrepressible to be in the least abashed at the presence of strangers.

“What is the matter with this place, Suib?” he at length asked, turning to his gun bearer for advice. “These people do not seem happy—they are afraid to laugh.”

Suib, who was bored, slowly smiled and yawned indifferently. “Sahib, one says that there is war with the *blakang tana*. It is as Allah wills—these pigs are always quarreling. They tell me the white sahib of the place will return about evening, and then it shall be known.”

“Well, let's get the collecting shelves ready anyway. It would be rather amusing to have to mix in a scrimmage before we can get in to collect at all—you'd like that, eh, Suib?”

Suib showed his shapely white teeth. “Anything,

Heaven-born," he grinned, "rather than rot here, and—Allah!" he yawned again—"grow fat!"

As the westering sun dropped behind the palms, a more than usual bustle in the village told of the arrival of the White Man, the only English trader in the place. George and Suib remained at work, remembering the first law of Oriental diplomacy, which is to make the other man come to you. In half an hour a footstep on the bamboo porch warned them of a caller, and George stepped out, to greet the little, wiry, weather-beaten English trader. He wore a Japanese bowl hat, the inevitable tropic whites, and the inevitable monocle of his tribe. George, tall, slender and muscular, in khaki and puttees, with his keen, youthful American features glowing ruddily under a pith helmet, towered above the little man from the British Isles.

"Barton Kegley's my name. Heard you were here. What's the news?" chopped out the trader, pithily.

"None. Met a pirate proa on the way up from Amboina and had the very devil of a row with them, but we made a clean-up," laughed George. "Come in, and have something."

Kegley stumped inside and slumped into a wicker chair. "Pirates, eh? Jolly go, that! Jobie coasters, no doubt; the Dutch gunboat keeps after them pretty steadily, but it's rather impossible for her to catch them at it. Hit this place about eleven years ago. None since. Doing a bit of collecting, eh?" he ven-

tured, looking around the room. "Interesting work—rather, I should say!"

"You bet it is!" came back George, enthusiastically. "I'm after some paradise birds for the Sultan. But say, man, what's the matter with these people here? They seem terror-struck or something. I've never seen anything like it in all my travels in the Islands. You expecting a pirate raid here?"

"No. You never expect pirates. They happen. But we have our own troubles, too. It's rather a rum go!" laughed Kegley. "These benighted heathen have a Great Karwar, a sort of head idol, set up in a shrine back in the *blakang tana*, and the old boy is offended—horrid mess! Rather!" he chuckled. "For these chaps all believe it, devoutly, and are doing *poojah* before his shrine like good 'uns. Timore, the head chief, is sick—that's proof enough that the idol's squiffy, y'see! And all the priests and sorcerers are jolly busy, looking for the right party to offer up to appease the Karwar. That's why these chaps here are all in a blue funk."

"How so?" inquired George interestedly. "What's the danger?"

"Human sacrifice," puffed Kegley coolly. "We have it here, in these regions, even yet. Missionaries preferred. Oh, this head Karwar is no end of a brute! Carved out of a solid tree trunk, and—well, you've seen the Fiji type—glaring mother-of-pearl eyes; hideous

mouth, with cowrie shell teeth that open and shut by a string pulled by the priests, and all that. These people are all scared to death of it, because it has a 'tongue of death,' they vow. The victim is held up before it, and something—its tongue, they say—darts out of the mouth and strikes him, and the poor devil dies in horrible agony. Cobra, most likely, kept inside the idol—but it works fine."

"Huh!" exclaimed George. "So that's the trouble I've heard rumors of, eh? It's safe for us to hunt in the interior, of course? White men, under Government auspices, and all that, you know."

"Oh, sure! You're all right, you're white," agreed Kegley. "A Government expedition put the fear of God—with dynamite—into these niggers about forty years back—and they haven't forgotten. Old Timore has really nothing but a fit of stomach-ache, from too much swilling, don't you know, but they'll top it off with a human sacrifice before it's all over, and you'd better play safe for a bit. And I'd rather keep an eye on the young-un there"—indicating the picaninny, Ali—"and keep him close at home, for they're liable to pick just him for the victim."

The hair rose on the back of George's neck at the thought. He had become greatly attached to Ali, and counted on him as a permanent addition to his official family, unless by chance his people should turn up. But that this little, adorable, grinning imp, in the inno-

cence of his eight short years of life, should be torn from him and offered up in some diabolical rite, for the benefit of a bloated potentate of whom he knew nothing and cared less—how the fighting blood boiled in him at the idea! Suib, too, smiled scornfully. He only just tolerated Ali, but still, anything that was George Sahib's was sacred!

"Deuced amusing!" laughed George shortly. "I hadn't intended to, Kegley, but I just guess I'll have to pack my guns in these parts."

"Do!" interjected Kegley. "You might need them, you know. There isn't an ounce of real vice in these beggars, you know, except when they get practical about their religion. For my part I'd like to go up there and throw about two pounds of purgative salts into old Timore, but trade is trade, and I've got to stick here. Well, I must be off!" he concluded, rising suddenly, and he strolled away down the village street.

"Suib," said George, turning to his gun bearer, "you watch Ali closely from now on. Don't let him get out of your sight."

CHAPTER VIII

RAJAH GEORGE

Since the season of the "sacaleli," the plumage dance of the birds of paradise, was in full swing when George, accompanied by Suib and the waif Ali, landed at the village of Wairibi, he lost no time in engaging a native hunter to guide them into the interior. There, at his command, the men built a palm-leaf hut for a three days' stay until some specimens of the birds should be secured. The men of Wairibi are all expert archers, and it was decided to let the native shoot the paradise birds in the time-honored fashion, from under a canopy of leaves built up in the tree where they hold their dances. This was done with a blunt-headed arrow, and Ali was detailed to lie in wait down in the forest, to pick up the stunned birds and kill them without injuring their plumage.

There are some eighteen species of paradise birds, all exquisitely beautiful. Only one, the lesser bird of paradise, is abundant enough to form an article of commerce, and it is known to civilization as the stock bird of the milliner. Of the many other species, Suib

brought in the first example within an hour after the palm-leaf hut was built. As gorgeous and beautiful as the Mussulman Suib himself, this bird, the king bird of paradise, seemed to George as it lay in his palm the most wonderful object he ever laid eyes on. Of an intense cinnabar red, with a gloss as of spun glass, the prevailing red plumage shaded to rich orange on the head, while across the throat swung a necklace of vivid metallic green. Below this, the breast was of fine white spun silk, while from each side of the breast sprang little tufts of grayish feathers about two inches long, terminated by broad bands of intense emerald green. Doubtless the Lord may have made a more beautiful bird, but doubtless also He never intended such for the eyes of civilized man, thought George, for just to see it would arouse the predatory possessive instincts of the white man, and the very existence of such a bird would be incompatible with civilization. Too many Eves would want to put it in their hats, reflected George, as he examined the feathered gem with wondering murmurs of delight—to Suib's intense amusement!

Early before the next dawn, they were awakened by the "Wawk-wawk-wawk!—Wok, wok, wok!" echoing through the forest of the birds of paradise on their way to morning feeding. Following them the jungle awoke to life, the shrill cries of the lories and parakeets, the scream of the cockatoos, the croak of the

king-hunter, the chirp and whistle of the smaller birds. George arose for another day's wanderings through fairyland, to find Suib already pottering over the camp kettle. Ali had long since gone with the native hunter to the bird of paradise rendezvous.

On this second day an uncanny sixth sense told him that they were not alone in the forest. George, standing silent for long periods of time watching the habits of birds overhead, would note rustlings, faint noises, inexplorable movements in the bushes, and strange calls or signals, which, even unfamiliar as he was with the jungle cries, seemed somehow to come from human throats. Knowing that the Papuans wished a human sacrifice for the great Karwar, he began to worry about the safety of Ali. If the wild men of the hills were shadowing them, it would be easy for them to kidnap the lonely child, waiting bravely alone in the forest for the game that might fall to the native hunter.

Soon Suib came back from a scout, his bag laden with fresh specimens, carefully wrapped in pandanus leaves. "Plenty bad men yonder, Sahib," he answered warily. "The orang-kaya's very sick, and his people are still on the war-path. Come, Heaven-born, and I will show you something!"

He led the way to a little, open glade, where was a patch of bare clay sand. Fresh footsteps, of naked, splay-toed feet, led across it!

"H-mm!" mused George. "We'll have to mount

guard to-night, and get back to Wairibi to-morrow, until this thing blows over, eh, Suib?"

"I followed this track, Sahib, and I saw him," declared Suib, ominously. "A tall, black man, with long frizzled hair, tattooed all over, as the way with these foreigners. He went along like a shadow, Heaven-born, and he was watching—following—you! He wore a necklace of kangaroo teeth—a warrior—and carried a long black bow. I should have slain him," yawned Suib nonchalantly, "except that there was no order from the Sahib. Shall we hunt these swine ourselves, then? Say but the word, Sahib."

"No; it ill becomes the White Man to make war on black savages. The Government would not approve, Suib. We must guard Ali, though, to-night, and get out of here to-morrow."

Suib salaamed. "It is as Heaven-born wishes," he murmured. "Shall I take the midnight watch?"

"Yes. Pay no attention to them at present—let's on with our work, while there is yet time."

They separated, now and then shooting down a new bird, always with a wary eye on the silent and inscrutable jungle. The native hunter and Ali returned at nightfall, to George's intense relief. They brought four perfect specimens of the bird of paradise, in full plumage. Far into the night they were occupied in skinning the day's trophies and in making notes on the crop contents, and then Suib, with a tired grunt, rolled

into his blankets and slept beside the childish figure of Ali, huddled on a mat of palm bark. The fire burnt low and the moon rose, flooding the jungle with silvery light, as George wrote busily by candlelight in his notebook. No hostile sound had as yet come to his ears. Night prowlers were absent from these islands; most of the jungle noises were of night birds, insects, the rustlings of small marsupial animals that correspond to our rats and mice—there was nothing to cause him to lay hand on the pearl butt of the long .38, snug in its holster. The sacred sovereignty of the White Man, George decided, lay over and protected him and his.

At the second hour after midnight, George, with a light-hearted sigh of relief, went over to the huddled form of Suib in the dark shadows of the hut. He stooped to shake him, then drew back with a swift curse of alarm. There was but *one* figure lying on the mat—and that was Suib's! The child was gone!

George froze with horror. Nothing but the majesty of the invisible white Government had protected his own life, then! The wild men of the hills had stolen the child under his very nose, with a stealth and cunning that had put his dull senses to shame!

"Suib! Suib! Wake up!" he whispered fiercely, boring into the Mohammedan's ribs with his knuckles. "Ali's gone!"

"Name of the Prophet!—What's wrong, Sahib?" grunted Suib, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. "Who—where is the little native?"

"Ali's gone! Stolen! We must act quickly—get up!" hissed George.

"It is Kismet!" returned Suib, shrugging his shoulders stoically. "I opined that it was the will of Allah that this little one should die. In India there are a million more babies—let the hill men have this one, Heaven-born," he pleaded, sleepily.

"No! The Sahib wills otherwise," said George firmly. "This *chico* is mine, and until returned to his mother, it is against the White Man's *izzat* (honor) to abandon him. Come, wake up the hunter and we'll go to the head chief's village."

"As the Sahib wills!" muttered Suib sulkily. "Perhaps there will yet be a fight!" he added, brightening up as he went to wake the native.

That night march was long to remain a thrilling memory to George. For an interminable time they followed the native through the trackless, moonlit jungle, finally reaching a broad trail which was doubtless the main road to the village. Mile after mile they sped down it, hour after hour, while slowly the moon set, leaving them in the intense darkness before dawn. Then, far ahead over the jungle, showed the red light of a huge fire, reflected against the sky line, and George hurried his men on the faster, for he dreaded that he

was already too late. Muffled, from afar, came the infernal beat of tom-toms—monotonous, ceaseless, maddening to his impatient ears. How long the preliminary ceremonies might last he could not but guess, but they would be some time about it, he was sure, for the medicine men would find it essential to work up the right pitch of voodooism to get the tribe's countenance for an act that was against the Government's taboo.

As to the "tongue of death," George could easily picture it. He had once watched a king cobra being fed in its glass case at a zoölogical park. At the first movement of opening the rear door, this diabolical serpent had sprung to striking position, ready on the instant to kill the hand that fed him. George had never forgotten that scene, the cobra, arched, ready, motionless, waiting minute after minute for the door to open. Then a tiny crack appeared in the back of the wooden case. It opened but a fraction of an inch and the cobra, baffled, struck furiously at it, while a tiny green lizard slipped unnoticed through the crack into the case. For hours the cobra remained motionless, ready to strike again, before it deigned to notice its hapless meal. Some such infernal creature was doubtless kept in the hollow body of the Karwar, brought from India by the priests, for cobras are unknown in the Archipelago. George could easily imagine the superstitious fear that such an idol would instill

in the natives ; an idol whose very visage spelled instant and agonizing death—such a death as would be Ali's, unless he acted quickly !

As the faint light of early dawn dimmed the glow of stars and fire alike, the road led up toward the last ridge, whereon was the village of the orang-kaya. The devilish drubbing of tom-toms, the deep booming of bamboo drums redoubled ; a vile squealing of flutes and the nasal whang of stringed instruments came to their ears, along with the indescribable croonings of a crowd of natives roused to the highest pitch of fanaticism. A vast throng of wooly heads squatted in a great semicircle before a bamboo shrine, under which frowned the distorted visage of a huge, wooden idol, hideously carved and feathered, and jeweled all over with fantastic designs of mother-of-pearl and cowrie shells. A circle of priests, in momo masks, chanted with upflung arms before it, while to the right and left were rows of drummers and musicians. Old Timore, bloated and bestial, lounged on a raised throne, his chin resting on a heavily braceleted arm, his eyes bloodshot and swollen, his lips disfigured and his teeth blackened with excess of betel-nut chewing.

On a high stool before the idol, stood the head priest, and George, sobbing with horror as he strode down into the center of the throng facing the idol, noted that he held Ali in his arms, while two assistant priests

were already tapping the idol's breast with feathered wands.

The child seemed to be doped, for he offered no resistance and his little wooly head fell sleepily on the priest's shoulder. As George stepped in front of the idol, the priest raised Ali a second time before the hideous visage, chanting in dreary monotone the while. Then, as he prepared to raise him a third time, the idol's teeth parted, disclosing a dim, motionless shape within.

With the quick flash of the gunman's swing, George's Colt leaped from its holster, poised an instant at a dim mark of two tiny points of fire, and then roared out, just as the priest had raised a fat chubby arm up to the idol's mouth.

There was a hollow smash of broken wood, and a violent thumping inside. Then a hundred natives jumped to their feet in a deafening uproar. Timore staggered angrily to his feet, and seized a huge flat-bladed spear. George's gun swung around, and the weapon was struck from his hand, as twenty warriors around the throne sprang for their weapons. "Kill! Shall we kill, Sahib?" whispered Suib, flashing out his scimitar, on tiptoe with eagerness.

"Stop!" called out George, using what little Papuan he possessed. "Timore—this is tapu!"—waving his hand at the idol—"The fire proa (gunboat), the sol-

diers, will come, if the governor hears of this! Shame on you, Timore!"

The old chief blinked at him stupidly, quieting his warriors with a wave of his hand. "Evil spirits possess me, and would take my life," he pleaded shakily. "The Karwar is very greatly angry, Sahib. He must be appeased."

"Your Karwar is dead! I, the Government, have killed him!" proclaimed George. "His tongue of death is gone!"

An angry shout from the priests greeted these words. The head priest danced about with yells of fury, gesticulating violently at George and chattering rapidly at Timore.

"What is he saying, Suib?" asked George, coolly, taking a cigarette from his silver case and lighting it carefully.

"He says the Karwar is *not* dead—he is more angry than ever," translated Suib. "He says that *you*, Sahib, must be offered up to appease him."

"Tell Timore, Suib, that I shall utterly destroy the Karwar—and I shall utterly destroy *him*, too, if he does not obey the orders of the Government," said George, glaring at the head priest.

Suib translated rapidly, as George opened the flap of a canvas pocket on his belt and drew therefrom a small, shiny, nickel-plated object. A shout of rage from the throng greeted Suib's words. A hundred

warriors brandished their spears, and looked to Timore for an order. George touched the nickel-plated cylinder to his cigarette point and cast it quickly at the hideous Karwar.

Brr-angg!!—There was a blinding, white flash and a tremendous detonation, as the walls of the shrine blew apart and the Karwar disappeared in a riven mess of splinters. Of the head priest there was not a vestige left; the floor where he stood was gone; a single arm, like a boomerang, flew across space and landed in the top of a cocoanut palm fifty feet above the heads of the natives.

The crowd stood aghast, stunned, watching George fearsomely, who stood with a second cylinder in his hand, eyeing Timore grimly.

“It is enough!” croaked the old chief, stooping with trembling hand to pour dirt on his head in token of submission. “Only let the White Man not let loose his thunders upon *us*! My people are as children at fighting, as compared to the White Men! I know! I’ve seen it! His devil-devil is very strong!”

George caught most of his meaning. “Tell him, Suib, that I, the Government, will now drive out his evil spirit and cure him. Let them bring me a bowl of kava.”

He caught Suib’s wondering eye fastened on him, as he replaced the other little, shiny cylinder in its pocket. That it was but a shaving-stick tin, filled with

dynamite and provided with a short fuse—he did not see fit to enlighten Suib. He dug out his fever kit, and rolled a pellet of calomel and another of aconite into his palm as Suib turned to the chief. Flames arose around the ruins of the shrine, but no one dared touch them, and presently a medicine man, on all fours, crawled to George, pushing a bowl of kava before him. George made what he considered sufficiently impressive incantations over it and dropped in the pellets. Timore drank the bowl greedily, and then sank back exhausted in his chair.

Then George felt something tugging at his feet, and, looking down, he perceived a native woman, crawling before him.

“Speak to her, Suib, what does she want?” he asked. “I can’t spare any more medicines; she must come to Wairibi.”

Suib grinned, and after the exchange of a few words—“She is the mother of Ali, Sahib,” he smiled softly. “She wants him back. The priests still have him—bound.”

“Fetch him here!” ordered George, pointing at the knot of priests, who were watching Timore with anxious faces.

“Cut!” he commanded. “Since when has the black man dared bind!” A dozen knives made haste to cut the ceremonial bandages about Ali. George took the child tenderly into his arms, kissed him, and handed

him to his mother, who smothered the little fellow in her embraces.

"Good-by, old chappie!" he muttered huskily. "Remember the White Man when you grow up, old fellow! Come, Suib, get hold of the native hunter and let's get back to camp, or the ants will have eaten all our specimens."

A murmur arose from the crowd as they turned to go. "What are they saying, Suib?" George inquired quickly.

"He sleeps, Sahib! The chief sleeps!—for the first time in a week! Your devil-devil is working, Heaven-born," said Suib, adoringly. "I know something of the power of the White Man myself—verily he holds the keys of the seven heavens and the seven gehennas! Come, let us go!"

A powerful war chief pushed through the throng and touched Suib on the shoulder. With a few words he handed him a necklace of the claws of the tree kangaroo, pointing at George.

"It is for you, Sahib. No one but a free warrior may wear it. The tribe adopts you as a chief, and wishes you good hunting!"

"Good!" exclaimed George, cordially, and, seizing the war chief's arms, he rubbed noses with him. Instantly the tribe burst into extravagant, boisterous Papuan merriment, happy and carefree as is their accustomed character. George and Suib set off down

the trail, accompanied by an army of singing, tumbling, gleeful savages—whose dreaded Karwar was destroyed and whose chief was cured. The hunter was despatched to camp with a band of helpers to bring in the specimens.

When George's army melted noiselessly away, like partridges in the forest, George knew that he was approaching Wairibi.

Kegley came out to meet him. "Heard you had the devil's own row, up at the village," grinned that worthy gentleman.

"Sure!" laughed George. "Had to gentle 'em a bit. Dynamited the Karwar, cured old Timore, and mussed up a perfectly good medicine man. But I'd hate to have these people shot up by a lot of soldiers on my account. As you say, they are nothing but children, and there isn't a scrap of real badness in them."

"Rather! My word, but you must tell me all about it, old chap!" quoth Kegley, leading the way to his bungalow.

George told him the whole story, Kegley, listening intently, now and then interrupting to purr, "Splendid! Splendid!" in a thick Northumbrian growl.

"I say, old chap, you're just the type we want here, don'tyerknow!" he exclaimed, as George finished. This place is getting to be too big a trading settlement to be subject to these eternal rows up-country, and

pirate raids we know not when. How would you like to be the Rajah of this district?"

"Why not you, sir?" queried George, too astonished to do more than gasp.

"I'd agree to, only I cawn't stay here, dear boy. My work takes me all over these seas, a month at this island, a month somewhere else. It needs a young energetic fellow like you, old chap. If you'll let me, I'd be delighted to ask for your appointment, you know."

George thought of their happy wanderings on the *Maui*, and of his mother coming out soon to Batavia, and shook his head.

"I really couldn't, sir—thank you ever so much, all the same," he replied earnestly. "I'm expecting my mother out soon, and my father, Captain Sloan, needs me on our steamer—no, I'm afraid I couldn't, sir," he demurred.

Kegley purred as he stroked his long white mustache. "It's the White Man's burden, old chap," he said at length. "We've all got to do our bit, out here. I've done mine: When I was your age I was a cadet in the North Borneo service—had a troop of native soldiers and policed a territory half as large as dear old England herself. Why not build a residency, here, and have your mother with you, at headquarters? This island is far cooler and more salubrious than any part of the Archipelago. We have the Pacific breezes—

look what a fine, clean, breezy place this settlement is, man!"

George had to admit that it was farther from the humid belt and nearer the vast, cool Pacific than in among the hot islands. His mother, he knew, would want to be near him. The Cap'n would be here and there, all over the Archipelago in the *Mauie*, dropping in on them occasionally, but a woman would soon tire of the small quarters on shipboard. She would want a house of her own. Why not here? They could visit civilization, at any time, in the *Mauie*. Near him would be home, to her. It did not look so bad, if the Cap'n would consent—which George knew he *would*!

"All right, sir," said he at length, "Suppose you try your hand, and meanwhile I'll write the Cap'n."

Suib sailed next day in the proa, while George went up to re-visit Timore and get on friendly relations with the inland tribes. Before he knew it, he was already installed as a court of justice and doctor of numerous ailments of an ignorant and helpless people. The pity of it all grew on him. These savages were mere children. Their "law" complaints were ludicrous, yet very real to them; their diseases were nothing before quinine and laxatives, yet people died of simple intermittent fever, lacking any remedy at all. This work, dealing with human beings, grew on him. He was more than ready, when the *Mauie* herself hove

in sight off the coral reefs and anchored in the sandy bay of Wairibi.

The Cap'n came ashore with an official of the Dutch Resident. "Son—congratulations!" he beamed, as he strode up to George with outstretched hand. "We've been busy over at Amboina—my stars, but we have, son!" He handed George an official document, and introduced the Dutch official, who, as usual, spoke English fluently.

"It's a fine work, my young friend, that you have agreed to do for us!" said the latter. "The Resident was much pleased with Suib's report of how you handled this affair. He appoints you Rajah of this district, which includes this island and the large ones of Sook and Biak adjoining. Jobie Island is so bad that we shall have to take care of it ourselves. But we feel that we can trust you here."

"How's that, *Rajah* George!" chuckled the Cap'n, "you are to train a police force, and act as adviser to this old chief—Timore, ain't it?—and there's an appropriation of five thousand guilders to build a strong fortified Residency, right here."

"Great!" grinned George. "I've been up with Timore all this last week, holdin' court, and doctorin' his people. No trouble at all to pick up a set of young natives for police! Can I have a proa, sir, for visiting the other islands?" he asked, addressing the Dutch official.

"It has been arranged for. An armed one, with two cannon," smiled the latter. "You can start right in cleaning up the district."

"My word!" grinned Kegley. "And, young-un, I don't know of a better man than just you for it, either!—Rajah Sloan, if you please!"

"And now, gentlemen," wheezed the Cap'n, "I gotto borry him for a few weeks. His mother's coming out to Batavia, and I reckon her comin' 'll jest be about spoilt without her boy to meet her—eh?"

The others nodded assent. George felt that this was rather a good old world! His elders were giving him their confidence and trust in managing the natives—seemed willing to do anything in the world for him!

"You just run along, young-un," beamed Kegley. "I'll go up to see Timore about some workmen, and I'll look after putting up your Residency while you're gone. I cawn't promise it'll be *done*—natives being what they are—but we'll have something for you to look at by the time you get back—my word on it!"

"All right—le's go, father," said George, looking longingly out to where the *Mauie* lay at anchor. "We'll pick up Migi off Borneo. I want mother to know him. Besides," he grinned, "he's not the only one of us that's runnin' things—now!"

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